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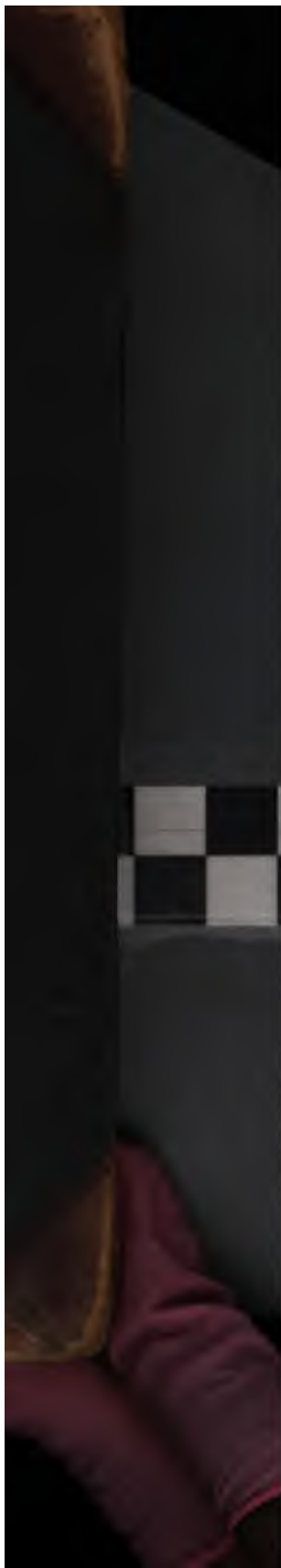
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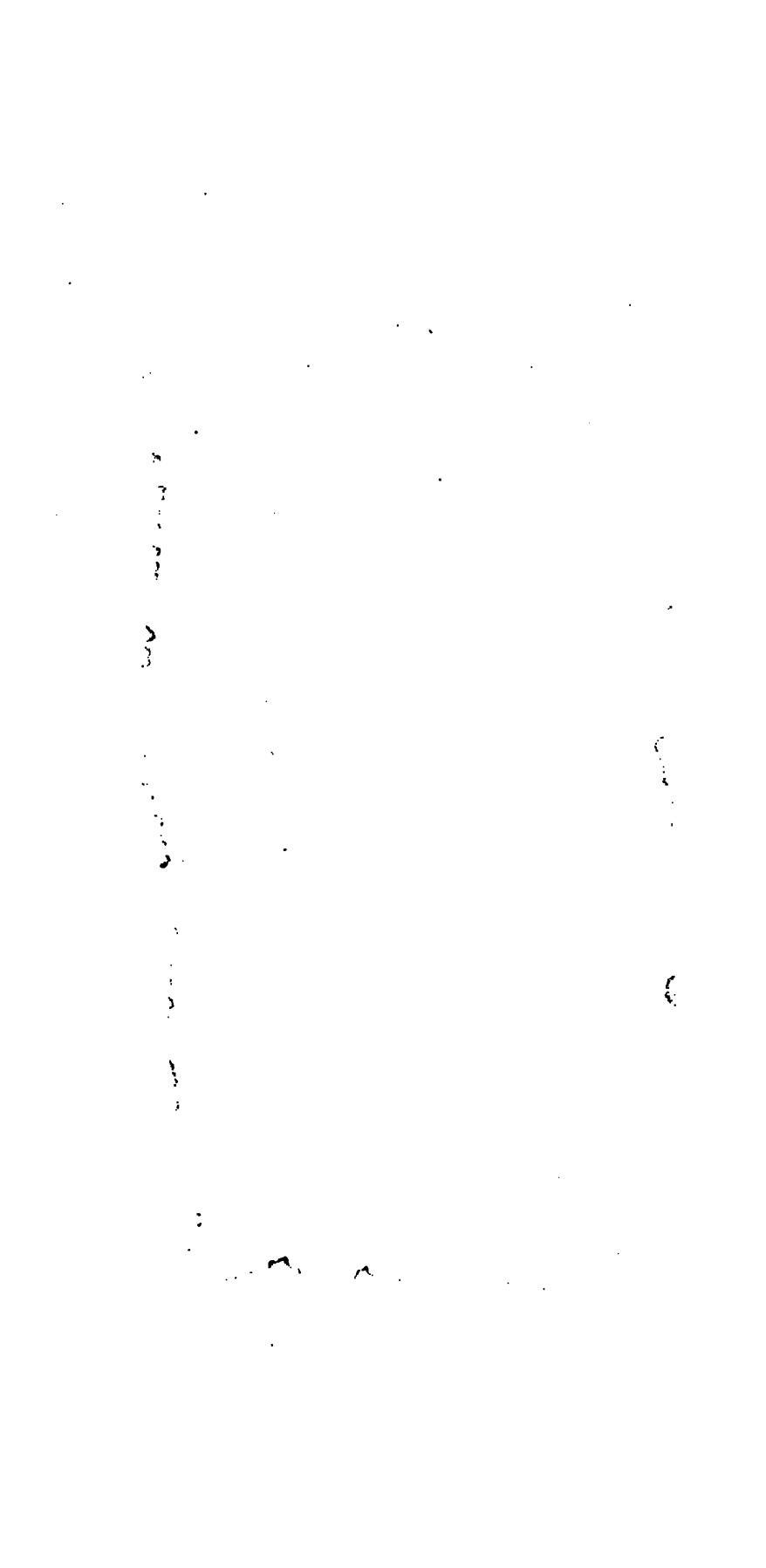
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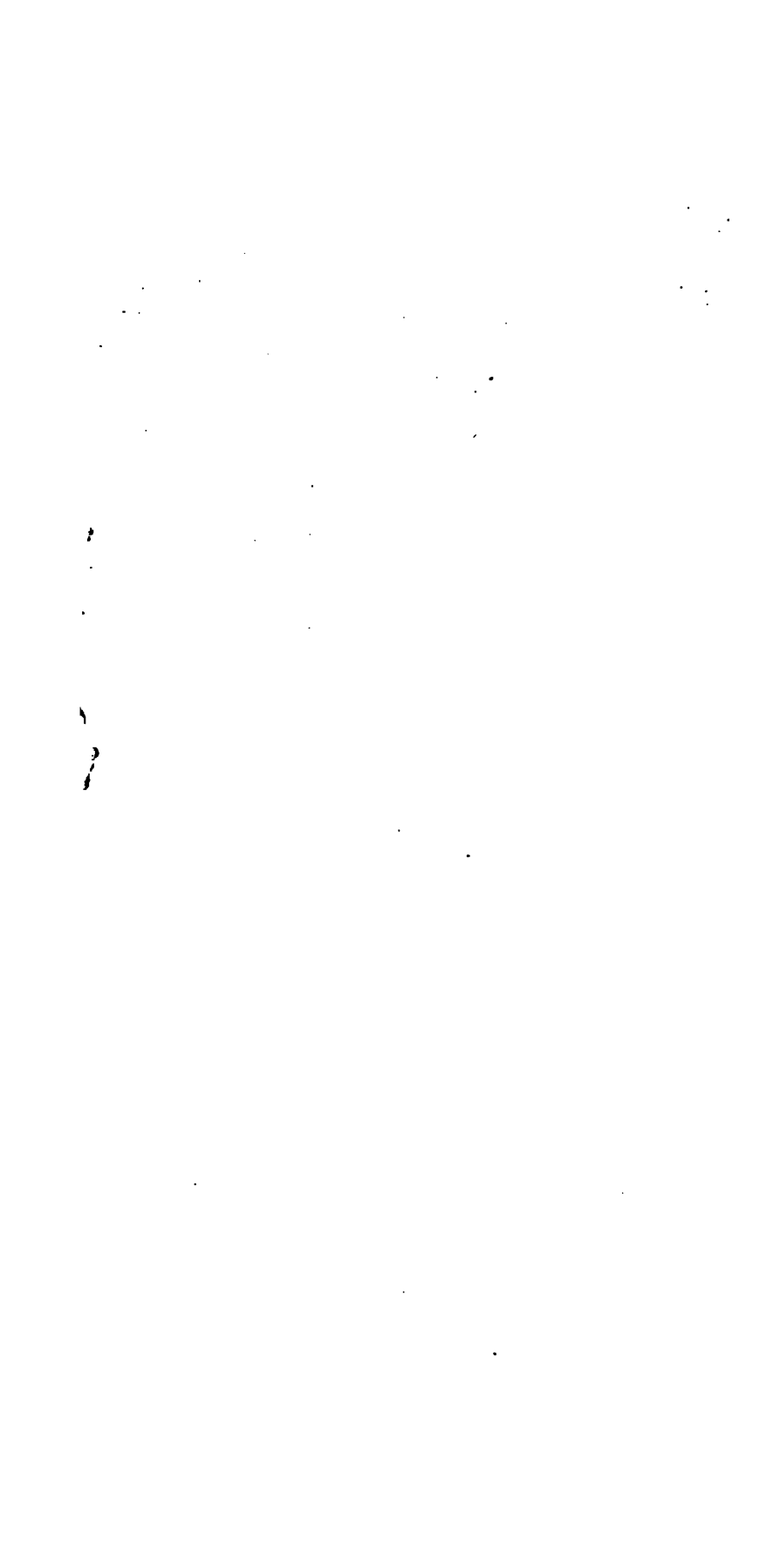


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ARTHUR CONINGSBY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

By John Estlin

“What is your substance, whereof are you made,
That millions of strange shadows on you tend?”
SHAKSPEARE—*Sonnet LIII.*



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ARTHUR CONINGSBY.

CHAPTER XXI.

So passed the time, till Dumond informed Arthur, that he and some others of the choicer spirits then present were about to sup in another room, and begged of him to join them. As the mute request of Louise compelled him to stay in the house, and he cared but little how he employed himself, he readily agreed to Dumond's proposal.

The party in which Arthur soon found himself was as singularly composed as

might have been anticipated, from the nature of the assembly out of which it was selected. The president was a short, fat man, who had carried the bottle in Sophie's procession. He was clothed in rags the most absurdly assorted, with a grizzled beard, an enormous mouth, protuberant lips and nose, a deep red complexion, and little shining eyes, framed in a world of wrinkles, making up an aspect which, on the whole, was that of a modern and very jovial satyr. He was crippled in one leg, and could move only by help of a long stick. This worthy was a parasite, not of any individual, but of the whole idle and debauched public. His popular name was Papa Noël, which was sometimes converted by his more learned acquaintances—among whom was Danton—into Papa Silène.

Billaud Varennes was making love to the splendidly-dressed woman who had entered with Rosalie, and whose name was Madame Nemours. Cloots, the preacher of materialism, confronted Chaumette, who delighted in the cabalistic watch-word—Reason. The latter was arguing with M. Mollien, a tall, thin, saracen-like traveller, who maintained that Mohammedanism was a perfect system of morals and politics. Mademoiselle Séraphine attracted to her side both Fleury and Dumond, on whose arm Rosalie was leaning; and near them sat Madame Carfours, with her usual sullen and menacing expression, glaring, like a robber's fire in the ruins of a palace, through the remains of her beauty.

Beside her, and curiously contrasted with her, was Papa Noël, with his keen

eyes, and comic wine-empurpled face. The venerable man endeavoured to establish a romping flirtation with Rosalie, until the supper was placed on the table, when he instantly began to help the company to the dish before him.

Almost every mouth was soon occupied in eating, drinking, and talking ; while Arthur hardly tasted any thing, and remained involved in the meshes of a painful reverie. He caught enough of the conversation around him to be disturbed by the noisy merriment, but comprehended scarcely any thing that was said. The sounds that reached him were not at all more expressive or agreeable than the buzzings in a sick man's ear ; and in the few moments, when his attention was sufficiently roused to understand what was uttered, and to distinguish the aspects

and gestures of the persons who surrounded him, he felt neither sympathy nor dislike, but a confused kind of amazement. Once or twice some one addressed him, and starting from his dream, he attempted to disguise his absence of mind, and escape observation, by hastily pouring out and swallowing glass after glass of wine. He was gradually in some degree excited. He looked around him sharply and rapidly, and began to observe countenances and listen to conversation so different from any thing with which he had before that night been acquainted.

It was evident that the company in which he now sat could never have been brought together, even by the utmost wantonness and licence of frolic, at a time when the usual restrictions of society were at all less loosened than they were

during the French Revolution. He had no taste for low associates ; but it did not occur to him that he was associating with those among whom he was now placed. They did not present themselves to his thoughts in the light of companions, but rather as effigies of pasteboard and straw, painted automata, that might annoy or amuse him, but with which he could not possibly have any feeling of fellowship for evil or for good. He had again sunk into a state of discontented passiveness, when he was awakened by the voice of *Made-moiselle Séraphine*, who exclaimed to him that he looked so absent, he must certainly be in love. The topic of love brought out remarks from most of the persons present, and the conversation on this subject lasted for some time.

“ What follies are you talking about,

adoration and love?" suddenly interposed Madame Carfours. "I know what love is as well as any of you; and I have been adored too in my time, if an hundredth part of what I was told had any truth; and I say, that all this is childish nonsense. It is hatred that we need to support us in the long run. Hatred wears warm and long when every thing else about us has fallen into tatters. It is stout food in the stomach, and puts fire into the veins, when all your stupidities of sentiment are found to be worth no more than a baby's pap. You young people, that are kissing and talking nonsense, and think that you have your whole soul on your lips to make love with, will know by and by that there is something here"—and she pressed her shrivelled hand on her bosom—"which never comes

into play till you begin to hate, and which alone is strong enough to carry us through life. Come, I will give you a toast :”—
“Long live—” “Yes, yes!” exclaimed several voices at once; “leave all that talk about hatred, and let us drink some one’s health. Whose shall it be? Your’s, Madame la Duchesse?”

She filled with brandy a small glass that stood before her, looked round the table at the face of every one, and fixed her gaze on Arthur’s for a moment longer than on the others, probably because she saw in it at the time a restless and gloomy depth of expression, which accorded in some degree with her own feelings. Her eyes, partly from their natural brightness, partly from the effect of the rouge that was caked upon her cheeks, but, above all, from the hard and violent character of

the woman, shone with a fierce glare, as if they had been made to glitter by the varnish of some deadly gum. When she had thus surveyed her guests, she said, with a slow harsh voice, "Yes, I will give you a health: Let us drink"—another pause—"to Death, and hope that he will aid us against others, till having no longer energy to hate, we shall need his assistance for ourselves."

Having pronounced these words, she drained her glass to the last drop. Several of the persons present set down the wine untouched. Dumond, Noël, and some others, after a momentary start, appeared to think that the main object was, the excuse she had given them for drinking, and so emptied their glasses. She looked sharply at Arthur, and saw a faint smile pervade his features, now

marked with the pale expression of weariness, and perhaps disease, while he drank off, without taking breath, the large draught, which had remained for a considerable time poured out, but undiminished.

A few minutes before this occurrence, the young Fleury had been seized with a violent fit of coughing, which seemed as if it would burst his feeble chest, and at once destroy his wasted, but still restless frame. He had left the room, and having returned while Madame Carfours was in the act of proposing her singular watchword of festivity, he remained standing near the door, and exactly opposite to her, and his large eyes, filled with the slow, consuming fire of a mortal malady, were fixed on her countenance. She did not see him till after she had drunk to

the name of Death; and when she looked in that direction, and beheld him standing before her, motionless, but for his panting breast and headlong pulse, her nerves, though strong as iron chains, shook for a moment, and it seemed that the terrible power she had invoked was embodied to her sight in the person of the graceful boy.

“ You talked, did you not ? ” he exclaimed, with a gay sneer, “ of hatred surviving in the breast with admirable vigour, when every thing else has perished ? Is there not something a little more substantial than hatred which survives in the pocket, and which you hold in even greater estimation than your sex-agenary passions and malignities ? ”

Every one was acquainted with her avarice, and all rejoiced in their hearts

that she should thus be punished; but most of the persons present were with good reason afraid of the violence of her character. The colour on her cheeks appeared of a deeper crimson, from the increased paleness of the natural skin around it. She trembled with rage, and Noël, who sat next to her, fancied for an instant that she was about to clutch a knife, which lay near her on the table; but she quickly mastered the outward signs of her fury, and only said, "You will so soon die, that it is not worth my while to punish you for your insolence."

Fleury laughed carelessly, and when he had sat down, he again addressed her: "Well but, Carfours, as I am going to die, (and, as you say, my death will be no great loss,) my opinion ought to have

an oracular kind of value. Now I really think you are quite right about the comfort of hating people; only I do not see the use of thinking about them long; and therefore, when I have had occasion to detest any one very heartily, I have always let him know it in a way which would certainly prevent him from giving me a second provocation. But as to keeping one's dislike, without doing any thing to gratify it, that seems to me the most contemptible childishness. You have probably forgotten what love is like; but believe me it is much more agreeable than hatred."

Nemours, Rosalie, and Seraphine, all looked complacently on the youthful advocate for love. Fleury rejoiced in those bright glances, in the cold splendour of Sophie's eyes, the sleepy rich-

ness of those of Madame Nemours, and the sparkling gaiety of Rosalie. The flush on his thin cheek deepened, his look caught light from theirs, and he seemed to rush forward with a new and headlong energy into the wild business of the hour. He exclaimed, "These pretty faces make me remember my first loves. But the subject is too tender; and I shall set the ladies weeping. Ah! how well do I recollect the time when I discovered that bright eyes, and a white round neck, and an airy foot, are more bewitching than sweetmeats or playthings, dogs or horses, or even than a big book full of old stories about the Greeks and Romans.

"It was certainly very odd how all my friends were deceived. They wanted to give me a philosophic tutor; and they

found one who knew Latin pretty well, and cards, music, and gallantry in perfection ; and yet, to their disappointment and mine, he turned out pious at last. I was too young, for I was only eleven or twelve years old, to profit by all his attainments, but still I made some progress ; and I found other instructors to teach me a good deal of which he would, perhaps, have left me ignorant, swearing for instance, and gaming, taking all I wished for wherever I could find it, drinking, stabbing, and so forth. I thus became a very accomplished youth ; and my friends had every reason to be satisfied that I was sufficiently philosophic, only they may, perhaps, have thought that my philosophy was rather too practical. Come, theory is all nonsense ; we must practise ; is it not so, Papa Silène ?

“Well,” he continued, “when my Abbé had been with me for two or three years, he fell dangerously ill ; and I enjoyed some weeks of greater liberty than I had ever known before. Happily, however, he escaped from the hands both of the doctors and the priests, and recovered. I was not a little surprised when I found that the good man had taken it into his head to be furiously moral and pious ; and that he was determined to convert his pupil. I did not oppose his design, for he had grown to be so sincere in his devotion that he would infallibly have killed me with religious punishments. He talked to me constantly about the delights of sacred contemplation, and the beautiful visions of saints and angels, with which well behaved people are favoured. I

could not comprehend this; but I listened with the most profound humility, that I might flatter him into letting me do as I pleased for one half the day.

“Besides giving me these private instructions, he now insisted that I should go regularly to mass; and I was compelled to submit. I went for a week or two, and began to think the whole business intolerably tedious, and to plan some means of escaping from it. I made up my mind that, though I should be forced to leave home for ever, and wander about the world, I would not consent to revisit the church, which was attended by my poor little Abbé.”

“Ah! the poor little Abbé,” said Rosalie, “what became of him?”

“Probably this,” replied Chaumette,

and drew his finger across his throat :
“That is the best fate for priests. I would present them all to the Abbaye, which eighty of them visited not a week ago.”

Rosalie turned pale. Arthur's eyes sparkled for a moment, roused from their look of abstraction. But at the next instant an expression of scorn succeeded in his countenance, to that indignant glance. All the others appeared unconscious that anything extraordinary had been said; except, indeed, that Noël, Cloots, and one or two more, burst into laughter.

Fleury turned his angry eyes full on Chaumette, and said; “No, sir, the Abbé was an honest man. He has been saved. He is out of France.”

“Ah!” exclaimed Cloots, “there is

nothing which so much disturbs the human machine as religion."

"Yes, it is stupid enough here, said Mollien, "but in the east it is a different matter. When I was a Marabout in Fez, I lived the merriest life I have ever known. Riches, pleasure, power, universal respect,—I had every thing I could wish for; and all by a few monkey tricks, and by wearing torn clothes. I confess I could not drink wine in public as," he added, "I can at present." And thereupon he took immediate advantage of his newly-recovered liberty.

"Papa," said Rosalie, and laid her white, little hand on Noël's arm, "you must not let any one interrupt Monsieur Fleury's story. I want to hear the account of his first love." Noël seized her fingers, and pressing them to his

lips, exclaimed, "That is the way, my dear, to shut every one's mouth."

"I wish you would go on," said Madame Nemours, looking gently at Fleury, "your little adventure interests me very much. I am sure some pretty childish love affair was coming."

"Ah!" said Fleury, "do not these things interest every one? What can be so curious, as, after a few years have gone by, and when one is accustomed to every thing and weary of it, to remember how strangely the first feeling of love came to one's mind. Then the dark earth which had been so tormented by the spades and hoes of our instructors, and filled with the seeds of thorny knowledge, broke out at once into a garden of fruit and flowers. Then from the ancle, from the eye, from the bosom

which one had before looked at with no more earnestness than at toys and animals, a thousand new and bright emotions appeared to start, and cluster round the soul. The world was filled with gladness; and wherever the foot was placed, an elastic spring rose and lifted it again into the air, as if wings were suddenly added to it. And yet, amid all this festival of the heart, there is an uneasiness, a looking forward, an anxious hope. The mind has a natural misgiving at the apparent completion of its destiny; for in her, if she be the humblest that ever sewed a sampler, is found, as it were, the object of another's whole past existence, and guide of all a life to come.

“But I believe I have been making a speech as long as one of your's, M. Chauvette. I have a taste in my throat after it,

as if I had taken a mouthful of printer's ink. I must wash it away. Here is to the memory of our first loves : by the by I believe the less we think of them the better. M. Mollien, did you ever see a Mohammedan under the influence of the beautiful passion ?”

“ I flatter myself, that when I was among the Mamelukes,” began the traveller,—but before he could proceed, Rosalie said to Fleury, “ You have not told us yet the result of your attendance at mass.”

The crimson spot on Fleury's cheek grew broader for an instant, while he answered, “ Ah ! that may be told in three sentences. I was yawning throughout the service, and had made up my mind not to be present at another, when I thought that I might as well take a

last look at the church. I saw nothing that I had not observed a dozen times before, till I happened to distinguish a young girl kneeling in a corner, whose dress was of the plainest kind, and her form exquisitely beautiful. I was placed behind her, and could discover nothing but her simple clothes, the white glimpse of her neck, the graceful contour of her figure, and the earnestness of her devotion.

“I watched attentively and eagerly to see her face, and soon a slight turn of the head showed me one rosy cheek, and the sparkle of one sweet eye. I started forward at the sight, so as to disturb those near me; but again her face was hidden, and I was obliged to content myself, for the rest of the service, with gazing at the almost childish form, which,

lovely as it was, only excited the most anxious curiosity to behold at leisure, and face to face, the delightful creature to whom it belonged. When the mass was over, she remained for some moments absorbed in devotion; and the Abbé, I believe, could not at all account for my spontaneous patience in waiting an instant beyond the time at which I might have escaped. She rose from her knees, with her eyes still fixed on the pavement, and I saw her countenance, of which I will only say, that I have never seen a more beautiful, or one which, being so soft and innocent, was at the same time so evidently full of sleeping passion.

“She appeared to be about sixteen, and I was myself rather younger. It was clear that she wished to avoid observation, while she glided away through the

crowd. I had now something more interesting to think of than the Abbé's lessons, or my boyish pranks. I had found out that there is a pleasant link between one's self and another; and every thing was contemptible and stupid which did not in some way connect itself with her.

“ When, in the midst of these emotions, the Abbé began to speak to me about his sainted virgins and lovely cherubs, I thought that, for the first time, I understood what he meant by his raptures and ecstasies. I, too, felt that I could kneel down, and remain for hours absorbed in admiration of the image that filled my heart; and it did not seem to me ridiculous to talk, as did the Abbé, of throwing one's self on the ground, and kissing the spot which has been touched by the

footstep of the worshipped one. But I confess I did not agree with him in thinking that nothing could justify this enthusiasm, except the martyrdom or saintship of its object.

“In short, I now experienced that love which no one ever forgets in after-life, and the charm and sweetness of which can never be repeated. Pooh! I am making a fool of myself. This is better than all the sentiment in the world, is it not, Papa Noël?”

And he filled a glass of brandy, and drank it off. The death fires were burning in his eyes, and it seemed, from the energy and hurry of his manner, that he was rushing, like a self-sacrificed devotee, with delirious fury into the tomb. He drew a long respiration, but the pain of his lungs forced him to press his hand

over his breast, and gasp with open lips for another draught of vital breath.

In a few seconds he muttered, "Come, it is my last confession. These are odd priests. No matter, it will soon be over." And speaking aloud, he then continued his story. "I went the next morning to the same church; and when we were going away, I took care to be separated in the crowd from the Abbé, and followed her. The poor child did not know so much of love even as I did. We taught each other, and those lessons are not easily forgotten: to get rid of the recollection, one must drown it."

Again he drank a glass of a strong vintage. "My story," he proceeded to say, "is done. She was thrown into prison by a *lettre de cachet*; but she contrived to give me notice, and, to avoid

the same fate, I left my home, and began to be what Monsieur Cloots would call a citizen of the world. It is a pleasant trade enough, but I shall soon have done with it."

He clasped the hand of Madame Nemours, and, exclaiming gaily, "Well, I shall at least touch once more a pair of rosy lips," he pressed his mouth to hers. She gave an hysteric kind of laugh; and she had lain on his arm for some minutes, and Rosalie had made her drink a few drops of wine, and smell perfume, before she recovered.

"Come," said Fleury to Rosalie, "let us dance; Noël will play the fiddle for us." The girl replied, "First, as Madame Nemours has recovered, tell us what became of your young friend, who was imprisoned for her kindness to you."

He answered calmly, "She died in prison." And his eye dilated and flashed with triumph while he added, "It is but a few hours since I drove a pike through the heart of the minister who issued the order for her arrest."

"I am glad," exclaimed Chaumette, "that there is no longer any doubt of your patriotic principles. I assure you I began to have strange suspicions when you talked about saving a priest."

"Poor fool!" replied Fleury, languidly, "how ridiculous you are with your patriotic principles; you must be despised by every one but a coward; and you are good for nothing but to be laughed at. However, I am so tired, that I will lie down for a few minutes, and try if I can go to sleep."

When he had left the table, "We must begin again," cried Noël; "we have

been interrupted; we will drink to the pleasant dreams of Fleury."

The invalid did not seem able to lay his head easily on the sofa, and Arthur took a cushion and placed it for him as a pillow. A smile played around his lips while he said, "My friend, I would swear that you are neither a philosopher nor a minister." His eyes closed, and the Englishman left him, again to sit among the party who were mingling in those mad orgies.

The wine had in some degree heated his brain, and he felt a theatrical kind of interest in the wild revel that surrounded him.

"It is singular," said Cloots, "to see in Monsieur Fleury the cerebral mechanism so perfect, while the pulmonary is so decayed and broken!"

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“ Oh !” said Chaumette, indignant at Fleury’s contempt, “ he is a wretched animal that cannot raise himself to the height of Reason.”

“ At all events,” replied Dumond, “ he confronts death like a soldier.”

“ Say what you will,” cried Noël, “ I have seen death encountered in America, and braved it myself with a courage that few men will ever equal.”

“ You in America !” said several laughing voices, for Noël’s mendacity was proverbial ; “ tell us that story. We may laugh if we do not believe.”

“ You shall know all about it,” replied Noël ; “ but I must intreat the ladies not to be frightened. It is now thirty years since I was lying in bed one evening, in my nest near the Barrière de Vincennes, with my friend, little Marie,

sitting working near me. One or two military acquaintances entered, and began to talk to me of the delights of war. They brought with them some excellent brandy, and made me drink. They talked, laughed, and persuaded me, so that at last I agreed to enlist. I left Marie in tears, and the regiment set sail for Canada. You will probably not be surprised to hear," continued the limping and wrinkled elder, "that I was then the handsomest man in the army:" and while he thus spoke, an overpowering expression of drollery played in a countenance of the most marked ugliness.

"Yes," he said, "as he saw the expected smile come over the face of almost every one present, "I was the handsomest man in the army, six feet high,"—here he struck against the floor the

end of the staff with which he commonly supported his lameness,—“and, as the wife of my colonel declared, I had the nose of Apollo and the lips of Cupid.” Those indescribable features appeared to grow even more grotesque than usual, as if to increase the absurdity of Papa Noël’s veracious recollections. “You will suspect that *Madame* had reason to be partial; but no, I assure you that I was always sufficiently virtuous to resist the strongest temptations. My modesty would prevent me from speaking thus, but the interests of truth require it; and in these corrupt times it is necessary that the young should behold living examples of a pure morality. Is it not so, Rosalie? Come, in the meanwhile, the only remaining model of temperance and virtue must be preserved from inanition. You

had all better imitate me, that you may be able to endure the horrors which I am about to relate.

“ My beauty and merit,” continued Noël, “ exposed me to the perpetual jealousy of the officers, and more especially of the colonel, whose lady treated me with distinguished favour; and, although I was a common soldier—such is the injustice of Destiny!—selected me as her *Chevalier*. But I was faithful to the image of my little Parisian mistress; and when we were fighting in the woods of America, there seemed to be but slight hope that I should ever see her again. In truth, I became indifferent to life. You must consider that the rations were bad, and that we had no claret in Canada. I exposed myself on all occasions with the utmost carelessness of danger, for

death would have been a relief to me. Not that my courage was such as that of some of my comrades, who would have been happy to die if they could have been certain of arriving at an infernal river of burnt brandy. I was valiant like the heroes and Paladins of antiquity.

“At last I was surprised, when alone in the woods, by a party of Indians; and after having killed thirteen of them with my own hand, was taken prisoner. To avenge the death of their comrades, they resolved to inflict on me the most exquisite tortures; and to render their triumph the more signal, they carried me to the summit of a hill, at the distance of two leagues from the fortress in the garrison of which I had been the most distinguished soldier. An old chief offered to save me, if I would become his adopted

son, and marry his daughter. But my religion, my country, my fidelity to my mistress forbade it; and I indignantly refused.

“ They tied me to the stake, and crowded round me, brandishing their knives and torches. It was very warm; the recollection of it makes me thirsty even now.” He drank a glass of wine, and, amid the laughter of the company, half suppressed in expectation of the catastrophe, thus proceeded: “ You will naturally suppose that I perished. Not at all. I had turned my eyes to heaven with a desire to pray, though I confess my heart was occupied by the recollection of Marie, whom I had left at Paris, and by the fear that my honour might suffer after my death from the suspicion of my having deserted to the enemy. However, with a natural

instinct,—I confess that it was not from any strong feeling of religion,—I had looked upwards, when I saw a small black body in the sky. In another moment it fell and exploded. The whole tribe of Indians was destroyed by the bursting of the shell, which lifted me into the air, and I fell at the feet of the colonel's lady, on one of the bastions of the fort.

“For the first few moments I was confused; the pain of a bruise in my right leg recalled me to my senses, and I discovered, by the expressions of those around me, that the lady, in alarm at my absence, had come to the lines to inquire for me; that nothing was there known of me; and that, on looking through a telescope, she discerned the preparations on the summit of the hill,

and insisted that a mortar should be fired to alarm my enemies. The shell which was thus discharged not only accomplished my deliverance by its opportune explosion, but, as I have told you, was the means of transporting me back again to the fortress. You, M. Dumond, who know war, and you, M. Mollien, who have been in foreign countries, will doubtless acknowledge that it was a very remarkable exploit in gunnery, for the distance was precisely two leagues and an eighth; though a serjeant of artillery informed me, that the line of my journey back having been a parabola, I must have travelled through the air a much greater distance."

Two or three of the women, and more especially Rosalie, looked astonished, while the men burst into the

loudest laughter. The old man assumed a face of the utmost gravity, though sympathetic ridicule was lying in wait at the corners of his mouth and eyes. "Gentlemen," he said, "I assure you the affair was very serious. I was seized with a dangerous fever, the consequence of over exertion, and lay ill for several weeks. I was as thirsty as ten thousand devils; but I was not let to drink. Come, ' must make up now for lost time"—he filled his glass—"and I did not know where I was, till I found myself in bed in a room near the Barrière de Vincennes, with Marie sitting by me."

Shortly after this consummate extravagance had been uttered, it was proposed by Dumond that some of the party should begin to dance. Noël was furnished with a fiddle, and struck up a

lively tune, while Dumond, Rosalie, Sophie, and others not hitherto mentioned, prepared to take advantage of his music. A moment's pause ensued before they began, and the sound of singing was suddenly heard from the back of the room. It was a verse of a gay drinking song, sung to the tune played by Noël. The singer was Fleury, who had started up and was now sitting on the sofa, and, with a face more painfully haggard than ever, broke in on the unthinking revelry.

All were startled; but the effort soon ceased, and the dying man said, in a feeble whisper, "Rosalie, this is not fair. You promised to dance with me; but—but—I believe I shall not be strong enough, unless you will give me a glass of brandy." He drank the draught he had asked for, and it sent a momentary

flush over his face, which became immediately after more pale than before. “ Rosalie,” he said again, “ after all, you are the prettiest woman here—though not so pretty as —.” He grasped her hand, and she said afterwards that his touch was like that of damp marble. In a few seconds his head fell back, and he closed his eyes. It seemed that he was dead ; but his hard loud breathing speedily undeceived the bystanders. Five minutes passed, and then his eyes again opened, and turned slowly towards Arthur. He went close to the sofa, and Fleury said, in a scarcely audible voice, and in imperfect English, as if unwilling to be heard by others, “ You are at least a gentleman—I was born one—have me buried decently, and put on the stone, ‘ *The last of his house, aged 20 !*’ I should not like

to be left in the hands of Carfours and the philosophers.”

His eye was lighted up for a second, and a slight expression of contempt marked his features while he glanced towards Billaud Varennes, Chaumette, and Mollien. In the next moment he was a corpse.

Arthur immediately wrote a note to a man of business whom he had employed in Paris, desiring him to make no delay in accomplishing the wish expressed by Fleury.

CHAPTER XXII.

IN the confusion which ensued on this strange death, and while Coningsby's thoughts were still occupied with what he had seen and heard, the words "Follow me!" reached his ear in a low whisper. He turned round, and saw Louise in the act of escaping from the room, which she had entered unobserved. He felt weak and feverish, but his mind seemed preternaturally clear and active, and instantly obeying her direction, he passed behind her through the gloom, until he found

himself in her chamber. It was a wretched room, feebly lighted by a single candle, and a bed in one corner, and two or three chairs, were the whole furniture.

“Do not be ashamed,” she said to him with a ghastly smile, “to come into my bed-room;” and she added, in a lower tone, “you are not the first.”

“Good heavens!” he thought, “is it possible that any one can have brought this unhappy girl to such a state as she hints at?”

He looked at her steadfastly. Her cheeks were painted with coarse patches of red, and the rest of her face was fearfully pale. Her soft, girlish features appeared to have been suddenly frozen by degrading misery, and were the more horrible from the contrast with

her dress, which was evidently designed to be fashionable. Her hair had been twisted into a graceful knot, fastened by a small comb, ornamented with pearls.

Her eyes fell before his gaze; and he said to her, "Louise! how is it that I find you here?" He feared that she had not at all recovered her senses, for she replied with that mournful echo which had been her mode of answering when he first met her, "*Here!*" But at the next moment she wrung her hands, and falling at his feet, exclaimed, "Have pity, Sir, for Louise. You were good to her before, and she is very wretched." He raised her, and placed her in a chair, and said, "Tell me how I can assist you, and you may rely on my help. How did you come hither? Why did

you quit the persons with whom I had placed you?"

She seemed to be more composed, and replied, "I wish you had not made me leave you. When you were no longer with me, they shut me up, and I had no one to care for. I wanted to see my village and my uncle. But the window looked on a court-yard, and they would not let me go into the fields. If I closed my eyes, and tried to think of the pretty valley, she told me that I must work, and gave me cloth to sew; and when I wanted to stay by the window, and look at the moonlight, I was forced to go to bed, and they fastened the shutters, and left me in the dark. If she saw me weeping, she threatened that she would give me nothing to eat. At last I was determined that I would go home

again; and I thought that if I could but escape from the house, you would meet me, and take me in a carriage all the way to Pommières. One evening I slipped away, and I went about looking for you, till I found myself in the streets of Paris."

She now began to weep, and her tears made stripes of white on her painted cheeks. "Poor, desolate creature," exclaimed Arthur; "and who was ruffian enough to bring you hither?"

"It was Corvet," she replied, "Corvet!" and while she pronounced the name, her countenance was so writhed, as to express the utmost degree of disgust and hatred. Coningsby knew this man to be a member of the *Commune*, and probably the greatest villain of the body.

She continued, after a moment's pause, and with a strong resolution in her look :
"Some men found me in the streets at night, and asked me for papers; I told them I had not any, but a scrap which I had seen you write your name on, and then throw away, and which I had picked up, and kept as a token of remembrance. They said that was no use, and gave it back to me. I have it still in my bosom. I was taken to a prison and examined; and when I had been put in a room by myself, Corvet"—she now spoke in a low voice, but with terrific vehemence,—
"Corvet came to me. I was worn out with fatigue and thirst, and he gave me a drink. I fell asleep, and I awoke a dishonoured wretch."

"Great God!" muttered the Englishman. She went on. "I was alone, and

in darkness, and I knelt down, and swore that I would be revenged. Over and over in the night my uncle came to me, and made me confess to him; but as often as I reached the last part of my story, he turned away with a frown, and would not give me absolution. In the morning I was turned out of the prison, and the gaoler offered me some *francs*, which he said had been left for me by Corvet; but I could not touch them. He also told me the address of that accursed man, and advised me to go thither. I had a knife in my pocket, and I went to the house, but he was out; and when I had waited a long time, they said there was no chance of his being at home that day, and sent me away. I walked about till night, and then I fainted on the pavement. Some

one gave me brandy, and revived me, and brought me to Madame Carfours. Here I have undergone infamy on infamy. My hands are filthy with pollution; but I will wash them in the blood of Corvet."

Her eyes grew fierce while she spoke, and exultation and horror rapidly succeeded each other in her countenance. "I will stab him," she said, "and no one shall help me. But you, you have been kind to me; I will let you dye your foot in his blood, and then I will travel with you to Pommières, where I will consecrate my dagger to God in the church, and my uncle will absolve me from my sins, and I will go into a convent, and sing hymns, without ever thinking of Paris."

"My poor Louise," he said, "I must

first secure your escape from this miserable abode."

"I will go away," she answered, "with you; and then nobody will dare to stop me. Hush! I hear a footstep: Ah! it is Madame Carfours. Oh! pray go into this closet, for she will beat me if she knows that I have brought any one here without telling her." He scarcely had a moment's pause to think of what he was doing, before the near approach of the woman made it necessary for him to decide; and he permitted Louise to shut him in the recess corresponding to that which contained her bed. The imperfections of the door enabled him to see and hear all that might pass in the chamber. Madame Carfours did not delay to enter. Instead of her showy garb, she was now wrapped in a dark dressing-

gown, and her grey hairs were no longer concealed, but hung loosely on her neck.

“ Well, Miss,” she exclaimed, as Louise stood trembling before her, “ do you expect that I should any longer tolerate your ingratitude and disobedience? Did I not command you to dress yourself, and appear to the best advantage this evening? And yet I find you in this state now. The half of Paris has been with me; and you might, perhaps, have made a friend, who would have been of some service to us. There was a rich young Englishman here, who seemed so much out of humour, that he might, perhaps, have been taken with your sulky face.”

Louise returned no answer but tears and supplications; the inexorable task-mistress of infamy continued to reproach

her with all the virulence of disappointed avarice and infuriate tyranny; and the appearance which the poor girl had made when she danced with the tambourine, was turned into a ground of the bitterest abuse. At last, the old woman excited herself to such a pitch that she struck Louise on the face, and was about to repeat the blow, when Arthur pushed open the door of the closet, and interposed between the foul Lamia and her terror-stricken victim.

Madame Carfours was angry at being interrupted in her vengeance, and at being seen in a garb less brilliant than usual. But she was pleased at the hope of gaining money, and after muttering a sullen half-apology, she was about to retire, when the Englishman said, in as calm a tone as he could assume, that he

had known Louise before she had ever been seen by Madame Carfours, that he was aware by what means she had been reduced to the situation in which she then was, and that he was determined instantly to remove her from that detestable and disgusting abode. The woman again became furious at this tone of contempt and of resolution, and made a long and incoherent reply, abundantly strengthened by vulgar curses and adjurations. She concluded by saying that unless he would pay her a very considerable sum -- which she named -- for the care and expense she had bestowed on Louise, he would not be permitted to remove her.

He had some difficulty in restraining himself from stating what he thought of the conduct of the persons into whose

hands Louise had fallen, and particularly of Madame Carfours herself, and Corvet ; but on glancing at the spot at which the unhappy girl had been standing, he saw that she was no longer with them, and instantly suspected that she had taken advantage of the few minutes that had passed, to steal from the chamber, and probably from the house.

He therefore merely said, that as Louise had disappeared, he would himself depart, and, if he could not readily find her, would apply to the police to ascertain whether she were still in the house where he then was. The rage and astonishment of Carfours at the flight of Louise were unbounded, and she was on the point of rushing out to desire her attendants to pursue the fugitive, when Arthur divined her purpose,

and, seizing her by the arm, detained her until he succeeded in passing through the door-way; and he then shut the door, and locked it on his baffled enemy.

He went on hastily and at hazard, and soon found himself in the large room, now dim and deserted, where he had spent the earliest part of the evening. He had made but a few steps along its floor when a figure, bearing a small lamp, started from behind one of the curtains, and approached him. It was Louise. She gave a cry of delight, and seizing him by the hand, hurried to the entrance of the house, and in another moment they reached the street. Both of them were worn out by watching and excitement, and after the first violent impulse, they had some difficulty in walking so far as to the nearest spot at which

they could find a conveyance. Once seated in a coach, and on their way to the hotel at which Arthur lodged, and which was at a great distance from the house of Madame Carfours, such was the weariness of the young man that he dropped asleep, and the miserable and almost frantic being whom he had succoured, checked her sobs, and wept in silence, for fear of disturbing the repose of her benefactor. When they arrived at his place of residence, a good-natured attendant promised that she should be taken care of, and sent immediately for a physician.

The day was breaking when Arthur laid himself on his bed, after hearing from the man of medicine that the patient, though dreadfully ill, was not in instant danger. He slept uneasily and at

intervals for many hours, which brought to him painful dreams, but scarcely any rest or invigoration. He was awakened by the presence of some one in his chamber, and he had hardly regained his consciousness before he found himself in the hands of several officers of the municipality, who announced that they had orders to convey him to prison. In less than half an hour he was the tenant of a cell, with handcuffs on his wrists and fetters on his legs, which were joined to a chain fastened in the masonry of the wall.

It was not till some time afterwards that he learned the cause of his imprisonment. Early in the day which succeeded to the night spent by him under the eyes of Madame Carfours, a young girl had presented herself among the many per-

sons who besieged the doors of Corvet, the powerful member of the *Commune*. In those strange times of trouble and novelty, her appearance did not excite much attention ; and when it had been announced to the master of the house that such a person was among the applicants for an audience, she was instantly admitted. So much were her face and bearing altered, that he did not recognise her. Nor until she had drawn a knife from under her clothes, and accompanied her blow by a look of triumph and a wild shriek, did he know that the woman before him was his victim, Louise.

She inflicted a severe, but not a mortal wound, and before she could repeat the stroke, she was seized and bound. She was conveyed to prison ; and some of the persons through whose hands she passed

had seen her at the house of Madame Carfours. This woman was questioned, and, in consequence of her answers, Dumond also was examined. The name of Arthur was thus obtained, and his apprehension immediately followed, although there was no evidence whatever to implicate him in the crime of the maniac, except what might be drawn by inference from the fact of his acquaintance with her, and of his zeal in protecting her.

Arthur was weak and ill, and for a long time he lay almost stupified on the floor of his prison. The different circumstances of his life floated before him like a vague show, in which he had no personal interest. The faces of the persons with whom he had been in company on the previous evening appeared to him

far more clearly than Isabel or Louise, Agatha or Victoria. It occurred to him as singular, that after displaying so much eagerness to escape from punishment in England, he should have fallen at Paris into the captivity which he had sought to avoid. And this slight and fanciful contrast between his designs and his destiny gave more occupation to his exhausted mind than all the stirring or melancholy events of his story, and all the persons in whom he had most keenly and profoundly felt an interest.

By degrees his thoughts, or rather his waking dreams, became more and more sickly, confused, aimless, and painful; until at last all self-possession, if not all consciousness, was lost in a drowsy delirium. He knew nothing of the lapse of time. So far as his sensations were

concerned, it might have been an hour or a year after his imprisonment, when, during a momentary abatement of his fever, and among the incoherent visions and sounds with which his malady bewildered him, he seemed to hear a deep sigh breathed above him, and to feel a gentle and attentive hand supply him with the draught for which he was groaning. But he scarcely distinguished these perceptions from the delusive impressions which were almost the only accompaniments of his sick bed.

It was not until several days had passed that he, for the first time, was capable of an effort of recollection. He found himself in darkness, and could not so command his senses as to learn any thing of his position by ear or touch. But he dimly and laboriously recalled

the images of motion and transition from sultry closeness of atmosphere into a freer air, and of a female shape that had glided for an instant before him.

He made a faint attempt to speak, and the curtain of the bed in which he lay seemed to be drawn aside, and a person, whose appearance he could not distinguish, approached him through the gloom. But his eyes were attracted by a light which shone in the chamber, and was partly hidden by some interposing veil. It sufficed, however, to show him, as standing near it, and watching him at a little distance, a woman in a dark dress, who evidently did not wish to approach him. She slightly turned her head, and he recognized the brow and eye of Madame de Valence. In spite of his weakness, he made a sudden excla-

mation, which was answered by a hasty expression of astonishment and delight. But the person who had before drawn near to the bed desired him not to speak ; said that a physician would speedily visit him, and then closed the curtain and retired.

Every hour now added to his strength, and his mind gradually became clearer and more active ; but for a considerable time he could not recall to himself any of the incidents which had passed during the one or two days preceding his imprisonment, any more than he could divine by what means he had been freed from his dungeon. He had an imperfect conception of seeing a mass of confused and bloody horrors. The figure of Louise flitted before him ; and from the form which he had seen in his chamber in

the first moments of returning consciousness, and which he could not avoid connecting with the fancied visitor of his cell, his memory reverted to Madame de Valence, as he had seen her in her splendid apartments, surrounded by crowds, who paid her the homage due to loveliness and genius, ornamented with the attributes of her rank and fortune, and moving amid the works of art the most appropriate to her character.

She did not appear again, and his attendants refused to answer any question. The physician, who visited him frequently, and with the most anxious care, gave no encouragement to conversation; and Arthur had at last abstained from fruitless inquiry. He was therefore both surprised and rejoiced when his benevolent medical friend informed him that

he was now sufficiently recovered to be permitted to rise from his bed. "Tomorrow," he added, "it will be advisable that you should go into the country for the complete restoration of your health. You will not, I hope, refuse to follow my recommendation, when I assure you that it is the wish of Madame de Valence. It was she who rescued you from prison; and she hopes that you will now take up your residence in her chateau de St. Ange, which is at an easy distance from Paris, and which, she desired me to add, that she has herself no intention of at present visiting."

Even amid weakness, pain, and mental depression, the sense of returning health communicated a certain genial pleasure to Arthur. He cherished it for a few hours, and dwelt on the consciousness

of it, as if this new enjoyment had been sufficient to occupy his thoughts. But he soon felt himself irresistibly drawn away to the difficulties and anxieties of his situation. Every moment which gave increased life to his faculties, by restoring vigour to his frame, enabled him the more clearly to estimate the evils with which he was encumbered, and those which still threatened to befall him. His most immediate distresses, and those which pointed their sting at the most vital spot of all the conscience, had arisen from his acquaintance with Madame de Valence; and these were augmented and rendered more perilous by the very efforts of her unhesitating and fearless kindness, to which alone he probably owed that he had escaped the scaffold. He shook away, however, by

an impulse of his invigorated spirits, these miserable considerations, and eagerly accepted the proposal that he should quit Paris.

The day after it had been suggested to him by his physician, he set out from the hotel to which he had been conveyed on his liberation, and where the melancholy days of his illness had elapsed. A carriage was provided for him by that care to which he was indebted for his life; and while he stepped into it, to remove farther and farther from Victoria, he sighed that he was not to remain in her neighbourhood, nor she to be the companion of his journey.

The sights and noises of the city smote strangely on his revived senses; and his first perceptions were almost painfully vivid. A few minutes put him nearly

at ease in this respect, though his mind only returned the more resolutely to the contemplation of its own sadness. But he had not proceeded far, and was still entangled in the narrow and crooked streets of the capital, when he was violently aroused by the approaching shouts of a crowd, and the death-roll of the drum. The tumult was advancing along a street into which the carriage had not yet turned, and the postilion prudently drew up before reaching the point where the lane in which he was opened into the larger passage, so as not to interrupt the progress of the irritable and dangerous multitude.

As the surging torrent rolled along, Arthur could distinguish all the minutest indications of its character and violence. First moved some thousands of the

rabble. Then came on, with all the conscious dignity of their function, several municipal officers, in ample and richly-coloured scarfs, which looked wretchedly inconsistent with their uncouth dresses and sordid aspects. A troop of the armed banditti of the *Commune* followed — squalid, blood-stained, and many of them intoxicated. They clashed their pikes and sabres to the music of the murderous Hymn of the Revolution, hoarsely echoed as it was by a myriad of applauding voices, and deepened and enforced by the volleying peals of the drums. After these was seen the crowded car, which conveyed to the guillotine a band of victims.

The days, more peculiarly denominated of Terror, had not yet begun; and probably all the persons now going to

execution had actually violated some revolutionary law, and had been condemned after some form of trial. They were of various ages and descriptions; but among them were no children, and only two women. On these, among several male prisoners, it was natural that the spectators should fix their eyes. Both were young, both had been attractive. They set side by side, and the taller and elder appeared engaged in comforting and calming her companion, whose eyes wandered as if in frenzy, and who trembled violently. The two were Agatha and Louise.

The nun was as tranquil and self-possessed as when Coningsby had seen her at Deerhill. A faint, unwonted tinge of red flowered on her cheek; and amid the shadows of the grave, and the foul

impersonations of horror that surrounded her, her eye glanced brightly and steadily as the morning star.

Arthur gave a fearful shriek when he discerned her and her unhappy companion. He would have broken out of the carriage and rushed among the crowd to rescue them, but that the grave and resolute, though aged, attendant, whom his physician had recommended to him, easily mastered the bodily weakness of a convalescent, and detained him till the dark, hurrying, and noisy crowd had shut the victims from his view. They could not have seen the Englishman; and they had passed on to inevitable death. In a few minutes more the whole cruel procession had moved by; the shock had thrown Coningsby into a swoon;

and before his consciousness entirely returned the carriage had passed through the gates of Paris, and was rolling on towards the chateau de St. Ange.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ARTHUR CONINGSBY never had felt himself in a state of such complete and powerless depression as now, when he was leaving Paris, attended by that melancholy troop of servitors whom it is so hard to rule,—Disappointment, Grief, Remorse, Doubt, and, following behind, the darkest of all, Despair. It profited him little that these gloomy personages haunted him on a glittering stage; that the temple in which he was surrounded by the Eumenides, was of stately archi-

ture and gorgeous decoration ; that the prospects through which he dragged his miseries were as rich and various as the happiest and most active fancy would desire.

The fate of Agatha and of Louise pressed on him with a crushing weight. His own circumstances presented no more cheerful objects to which he might recur ; and around the whole horizon of his mind he could not distinguish a gleam of light. After continued and moody silence, in which he had felt almost stifled by the agony of his sorrow, he lifted up his eyes, and endeavoured to fix his attention on the aspect of nature. The carriage was slowly mounting a long, but not abrupt, hill, and he desired to be let out, and began to walk.

He paused on the summit of the

ascent. They were now at some leagues from the city, and the dark mass of buildings was visible in the distance, lifting its towers against the sky. He looked mournfully at the spot with which so many of the most memorable and stirring occurrences of modern history connect themselves; the capital of a nation which has often shaken, and sometimes enlightened, the world, and always engaged its attention; in which was then passing one of the strangest paroxysms of social humanity that has ever convulsed men, and whirled round and overthrown their institutions; the place, above all, where he had acted a portion of his individual life. That portion, moreover, did not stand apart, nor was it to be forgotten; but it was interwoven with all that went before it,

and stretched farther into the future than his eyes had courage to examine.

The country between him and the dusky metropolis was bright with hamlets and towns,—white tents pitched in a field splendid with the spoils of the seasons, and the trophies and banners of nature. To the right was a cheerful and substantial village; below him another irregular web of walls and roofs; many diversified structures marked the distance with their scattered perspective; and all around extended the vivid tapestry of field and brake, umbered gold, and broken verdure. To the left, among knolls and vallies, plumed in yellow, winded a tranquil river. So brilliantly embroidered was the prospect, that the earth appeared another youthful Danaë, on whose breathing bosom riches and

jewels had been rained from the treasure-chambers of the sky.

Yet the country was comparatively deserted. Few persons but the helpless were to be seen in the villages, scarcely a labourer in the fields. From one or two points resounded the clang which indicated a manufactory of arms; and along a road at no great distance a body of men were marching who had just left their houses to join the army. Their songs and drums were the chief interruption of the general tranquillity, and grated painfully on the mind of Arthur. He was soon disturbed anew by the approach of a string of carts and waggons, filled with various contributions from a neighbouring department, such as canons, arms, church bells designed to be melted, clothes, saddles, and so forth;

the vehicles and their contents, the horses and drivers, being all arrayed with equal profusion in cockades and ornaments of the national device. They stumbled down the hill to the tune of *Ça ira*; and to hasten his escape from the noise, he re-entered the carriage, and proceeded towards the chateau de St. Ange.

This mansion was an ancient structure of grey stone, forming three sides of a square, with round towers and conical roofs at the angles; and a curtain of ivy hung, half drawn aside, on the tower which, in the centre of one of the wings, guarded the gateway.

Arthur speedily took possession of the apartment which had been prepared for him, and then returned into the other parts of the building for the sake of examining them. He had passed through one or

two long galleries, and several handsome but old-fashioned rooms, when he reached a door over which was written the word "Library." He entered it and looked around. The hall was lighted on one side by a range of narrow windows, and the walls were covered with books. These were, in great part, of large size and venerable exterior. Many of them had bindings of vellum; but the dark labels of these, the dusky covers of the remainder, and the sable of the book-cases, united with the deep brown of the floor, and of the many beams which crossed the ceiling, to produce a look of gloom and antiquity. There was still much of stained glass in the casements; a heavy, deep-red curtain fell over the door; and the imperfect light and complete silence aided to throw a peculiar

and impressive character on the long vista of the library.

A few old parchments, dim engravings, and carved crucifixes, hung in the recesses of the windows, and appeared perfectly in accordance with the kinds of books which made up the larger part of the collection, such as Romish theology, canon and civil law, and the early and bulky editions of the classics. The table, which extended along the middle of the room, was so massy and ancient, as to correspond with the volumes it was designed to support. But the straight-backed and carved chairs offered an uneasy seat to any one who might be inclined to spend in the apartment the time necessary for reading even a single folio.

How strange, he thought, that so

many hundreds of my fellows should have employed their lives in the composition of these volumes, and that they should be almost all so valueless to me. A few recollections of my boyhood, and my college life, lead me to feel that I have an interest in a dozen or two out of these myriads of books. But by no effort of the imagination can I conceive the slightest care for the thousands that remain. I can conjure up a dream of the recluse in his cell, the poet in his midnight chamber: but what are these to me? How many millions of leaves are here, each the produce of an hour of exertion on the part of some one, who lived, thought, felt, and mused on his predecessors as I do! How many human beings, recorded only on these mouldering title-pages, were each, in his own

day and path, lured on by the phantom of imperishable glory, to a grave long since forgotten! Every one of the brains that toiled to embody their visions in these worm-eaten tomes, was all in all to itself; and no one of them is so important to me as the fly that frets my finger, or the draught of water that makes moist my lips. Amid the multitude that surround me, the study of any one volume appears ridiculous. Were I inclined to master them all, how ill would the extent of any life answer to the desires of such an ambition! And were I so idle or so vain as to recount the little I have learned, or experienced, how soon would the meagre and chaotic scroll be lost in that obscurity, which is here the portion of gigantic books and life-long labours, of literary monuments in

which the learning of centuries is accumulated, and the minds of sages are laid open!

Thus meditating, he left the library, and walked into the open air. The chateau stood in the midst of a lawn, ornamented by mature and stately wood, rich in autumnal colours. The grounds were traversed here and there by straight and shady avenues, but between were spread those numerous and irregular masses, living piles of forest foliage, which clothed, as it were, in flesh the dead skeletons of Le Nôtre's art; with single trees, standing as resting places for the eye and thought, in the centre of green glades. Grotesque and sculptured fountains, moss-grown and weather-stained, but still telling of human labour and contrivance, flung amid the trees their glittering arches, painted with sun-

bows, into the tranquil air. But the basins, half choked with leaves, and the neglected devices of the old architects, instead of retaining the waters in their destined reservoirs and channels, permitted them to flow forth as natural rivulets, which wandered along the hollows they had worn, and divided the turf with sparkling floods of freshness. In several nooks of the landscape, statues from the antique still occupied their grass-fringed pedestals. Pan was girt and wreathed with a dark creeper; and Venus, as if grown enamoured of solitude, and the life of the wood nymphs, seemed, like a startled Dryad, to shrink among the bushes.

All this fell dead on the mind of Arthur, which had now no feeling in common with the silent and aged repose

of St. Ange. He wandered through the gardens and into the fields, but nowhere found any thing at all capable of exciting him. A few of the leaves had already begun to rustle around him on his path ; and so distempered had he become, that the murmured rhetoric of these withered symbols, nay the very solitude and tranquillity of the grounds, fretted and irritated him. He seated himself on the mossy step of an old sun-dial, and watched the waters, as they crept lawlessly through the time-worn crevices of the basin which they ought to have filled, and escaping on the green-sward, converted it into a patch of marsh, before they found a definite channel. This image of waste and perversion annoyed him, and he turned away to gaze upon the setting sun.

For some minutes his earlier feelings seemed to return to him, while he beheld the widened disk imbue with splendour the clouds beneath which it was about to be concealed. Is it thus, he thought, that I shall sink in calm and loveliness, having made a bright, a steady, and beneficent journey? Or, like yonder shred of vapour, after receiving a momentary ray of foreign light, shall I be swept before the wind that for a time upheld me, and be utterly scattered and lost? The twilight gathered around him, and, reluctant and dissatisfied, he turned from the gardens, and entered his apartment.

Of the two rooms appropriated to his use, the outer was a sort of parlour, and had more of the air of comfort than could have been expected in an ancient French

country house. Two of the walls were occupied by book-cases ; at each side of the window hung an oval looking-glass, framed with elaborate carving, in the style of the age of Louis XIV ; the old-fashioned table supported a contemporary ink-stand of embossed silver. A large fire blazed on the hearth, and the furniture of costly, though now faded silk, the beautifully inlaid floor, the polish of the dark wood, and the ceiling painted with figures, which still retained a glow of colour, all aided in rendering the aspect of the room agreeable, and even in giving to its inhabitant a feeling of quaint and antique cheerfulness.

The books in the shelves corresponded in character with the other contents of this old withdrawing room. They were for the most part poems, memoirs,

romances, and letters, the lighter and more amusing literature of France before the regency of Orleans. In such a collection, he found abundant ground for reverie, if not for meditation. The generations of the past are historically remembered in their distinct outlines and important actions. They are cut off from our familiarity by death and remoteness, and exist in a solemn and twilight region, only a little nearer to our daily paths than the abstract air-world of philosophy. But there is a melancholy gratification of our curiosity, in placing ourselves among the records of the follies and trivialities, the private affections and momentary interests, which, though making up the chief portion of their lives, have left no permanent monuments on the surface of society. The dead no

longer appear to us in a magnificent pageant, or as an authoritative synod, but display their minds in all those minute details and ordinary weaknesses which compose so strange an image, half mockery, half reflection, of ourselves. The traces of their amusements are more startling and impressive than the history of their mightiest deeds. The obsolete dresses and stiff attitudes of the figures that were designed to adorn their novels, are to us by far more strange and spectral than the paintings of their triumphs, or the statues on their sepulchres.

As the eye of the Englishman glanced along the shelves, in which were ranged so many dusty volumes lettered in tarnished gilding, with the names of the beautiful, and witty, and noble of another age, he

thought not of the political greatness and ambitious conquests of Louis XIV., but of Sevigné and La Vallière, and the personal characters and petty thoughts of those whose descendants were at that moment exiled, or imprisoned, or slaughtered.

While he was musing thus, Madame de Valence easily presented herself to his mind. He threw himself on a chair before the hearth, and sank into a reverie. He had been wandering for a time among the faded recollections and alien forms of a past century; but he found that *she* was still the masker, whom his fancy clothed in a thousand beautiful or grotesque disguises; while love, at every moment, delighted to pluck off the vizard, and let the alluring face beneath smile out into his soul.

His eye had been fixed on the fire, and he had discovered, in its accidental shapes, glowing embers, and bright flames, many lines, colours, and hints to aid his dream; but he suddenly raised his head, and his glance was met by a picture which filled the space between the chimney-piece and the ceiling.

The painting had been hidden by a green silk curtain when he before visited the room, and he had thus been prevented from observing it. The style of this performance was very impressive; and Arthur, for an instant, felt inclined to believe it a work of Salvator; for the landscape which, from the imperfect and partial light, first caught the eye, was mountainous and gloomy, and marked by a savage and mysterious wildness. It was such a prospect as that in which

the Neapolitan loved to place the figures of travellers or banditti ; of those, that is, whose momentary stay or appropriate character might seem the least to disturb the lonely retirements of his mind. The scene, too, was drawn and coloured with all his grave and severe energy ; but the figure that was placed on the stage, and the mode in which it was presented, showed at once that it was not the creature of his romantic imagination. It was larger and more prominent than the human forms in most of his paintings. But above all, it was more classically conceived than his were wont to be, and the manner in which it was executed was almost worthy of Corregio.

A man, with the awful aspect of a god, was seated on a rock, in an attitude of intent contemplation, and with his

stern eyes fixed on a rod that stood upright in a cleft near him, and from the top of which a brilliant flame gushed, and supplied the only light of the picture. In the middle distance, beneath an overhanging cliff, appeared a human figure, fashioned apparently of clay, and supported on a rude pedestal. The expression of the living form, still more than his gigantic proportions, indicated that he was designed as a being of a different race from that which had afforded the model of the inanimate image. From this representation, it was not difficult to discover that the painter had in view the subject of Prometheus after his seizure of the celestial fire, and before his communication of it to man.

Arthur could not attribute this remarkable composition to any artist with whose

works he was acquainted ; and he would have spent a longer time in examining and admiring its excellence, but that he perceived another picture, of size nearly equal to this, hanging on the same wall, and at one side of the fire-place. The curtain fastened to its frame had also been drawn in front of it when he was before in the room, and had been pulled aside by a servant in the interval of his absence. The canvass thus unveiled displayed a portrait of a young man, in a magnificent dress, of a fashion more than a century past, and with all the air and appearance of a person of high rank. The face was handsome, pleasing, and even intelligent ; but did not indicate a character very strong either in determination or in thoughtfulness. The painting was of very inferior merit to the other.

Beneath it was written the name Claude, Marquis de Valence.

From it Coningsby turned his eyes to the corresponding part of the room, at the other side of the fire. Here, too, was a picture, but still hidden by a silken drapery, which he drew aside. This, too, was evidently a portrait; and the rich dress belonged, like that of its companion, to the middle of the seventeenth century. The subject was a woman of a tall and graceful form, though no longer very young; nor did the face contradict the appearance of the figure. The complexion was delicate, but not brilliant; and the mouth and cheek had the fulness and softness of rare beauty. The picture showed that striking and bewildering likeness to Madame de Valence, sometimes observable in persons of the

most opposite characters. But the symmetry and hues of female perfection were in a great degree marred by the fierce and melancholy expression given to the deep, dark eyes.

The resemblance to Victoria, the obsolete and peculiar dress, the air of antiquity, the repulsive glance—all smote on Arthur together; and their effect was increased by the solitude of his situation, and by his previous disease and dejection. He turned away, and saw the room was filled with cheerful light, which glanced broadly over the ancient furniture and costly hangings. Having drawn the curtain across the picture, he rose to take a book from the shelves, and determined to lose himself, if possible, in the contemplation of long-past times.

He had lighted on the letters of Voi-

ture, and tried to engage himself with their laborious pleasantry; but he could not compel his attention to the page before him. Again he turned his looks, in sickly meditation, on the hearth. His fancy magnified the jets of flame and ruddy logs into palaces and caverns of solid fire, embattled towers, and splendid armaments. But he could not free himself from the thought, that those unfriendly eyes were watching above him. He started with joy when these visions were dispelled, and his reveries interrupted, by the entry of his attendant, who announced Father Jerome, the almoner and librarian of the chateau. He entered with much of old-fashioned politeness, and seating himself near the fire, at the opposite side from Arthur of a small table bearing lights, gave the

young stranger an opportunity of observing his visitor.

He did not appear ever to have been tall, and his stature was now diminished by the habit of stooping as if over a desk. His countenance did not express very extraordinary character, but was both kindly and intelligent, and the lines of age were mingled with those produced by thought long continued, but not, perhaps, employed on subjects of much variety, or of the highest dignity. The white hairs escaping from beneath a black skull-cap were an unquestionable title to respect. The neat dress of the old gentleman showed, that though altogether a recluse, he had not ceased to be attentive to appearances; and the friendly courtesy of his manner betrayed far less of awkwardness than might have

been expected in an aged and retired student.

Arthur felt that his presence brought a delightful relief from the misery of his own thoughts. They speedily became familiar, and talked about the old books, in the study of which the old man had employed his life, and of which the younger one knew enough to find them an agreeable, and even an interesting, topic. When the new acquaintances had conversed for an hour, Arthur sought to lead the conversation towards the history of the family of Valence, in the hope of obtaining some knowledge as to the singular picture which had taken possession of his mind. Father Jerome appeared reluctant to approach the subject, and for some time attempted to turn aside to any collateral matter on which he had

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a pretext for talking. At last, however, he said plainly, that he perceived on what point it was that Coningsby's curiosity had been excited; and that though the story was one of which he did not like to speak, he would furnish in writing the information desired by the stranger.

He had heard, he added, from Madame de Valence, that she wished Mr. Coningsby to be treated with the highest consideration, and he supposed, therefore, that he could not be doing wrong in informing him of all that was known about events so long gone by. The monk, for Father Jerome had taken the vows in a monastery of Benedictines, then began to advert to the state of politics, and from that they came back to the mistress of St. Ange. Arthur was a little surprised and extremely pleased

to hear the old man speak of her with the highest gratitude, and even affection, and celebrate eagerly and at length the benefits she had conferred on all the inhabitants of her estate. There could have been no surer road to Arthur's regard; and he and his visitor separated like friends who have known each other for half a life-time.

Soon after his departure, a servant entered the room, and laid before Arthur a small volume, bound in faded blue morocco. Its contents were entirely manuscript, and for the most part of an old date and difficult hand-writing. He speedily discovered that they consisted of letters and notes relating to the same story as the pictures which hung before him. To read them required some labour and considerable time. But the

emotion which they excited in Arthur was so keen, as to prevent him from pausing in their perusal. The name of Valence perpetually recurring, the startling and unaccountable similarity which appeared to him to exist between the ancient portrait and Victoria, pursued and disturbed him through all the story.

In spite, too, of himself, fragments of his own circumstances and most intimate feelings seemed to be mingled with all the lines of those time-worn documents. The chasm between the past and the present existed no longer. Truth, too, and falsehood were lawlessly blended; for all there written, he thought, could not be true. But his conscience suggested to him, that in the fiction, if fiction there were, was to be found an inner truth, most closely applicable to

himself. His own best affections and guiltiest passions rose before him in delusive confederacy, and now assumed and now threw off the names of other persons, and the garb of a former century. He was haunted by the consciousness of an impending destruction, reflected as it were, and verified in the tale he was reading. Muttering to himself, "The pages of the past are the real Sibyl's leaves that foretell the future," he began to draw up a hasty abstract of what he had collected from the volume, and before he retired to bed he ended a task which had for him an interest very different from that which alone it would be likely to possess in the eyes of others.

The tale was one which exhibited the action of high talents and violent passions—a record of temptation, weakness,

shame, and misery. The painter of Prometheus, a young Roman artist of the name of Antonio Saviola, had been the lover of Marguerite, the adulterous wife of Claude de Valence, and the original of the portrait in Arthur's sitting-room. Their love had ended for both of them in utter wretchedness, in infamy, and death.

The solitude and silence in which this story was first read, and then re-written; the identity of the spot with that to which some of its incidents referred; the sight of the very picture in question; and the analogy, imperfect as it was, to himself, co-operated to exert a strong influence on the mind of Coningsby. It was rather in complete exhaustion, than from the hope of sleep, that he entered his bed-chamber. He carefully fastened

the door dividing him from the room in which hung the portrait of Marguerite de Valence. He then looked round the chamber, and was surprised and displeased at seeing that it was furnished with hangings, representing her and her husband, in their courtly dresses, and occupied with various aristocratic recreations.

In the pride and happiness of the first year of their marriage, the Marquis Claude had caused the tapestry to be made, and it had since been handed down as an heir-loom. The bride and bridegroom were exhibited as at their marriage, as hunting, as dancing, and again as feasting. The colours were still vivid, and preserved a youthful image of that loveliness which had been so much transformed and darkened before it was

copied by Saviola. In each of the representations of Marguerite the one face and stature were preserved, though with differences of attitude and expression. In each he was puzzled by the same likeness to Victoria, and the same characteristic diversity as in the picture; but the unpleasant expression of the eyes was wanting; and in looking at the tapestry, he felt bewildered and deceived, but not affected with dislike.

His brain, when he laid himself in his bed, was filled with a medley of old remembrances and new perceptions. His sleep was short and troubled. He awoke with a start, and the chamber was full of a pale light, for he had in truth been afraid to leave himself in the darkness, at the mercy of the coloured shadows that glimmered on the tapestry.

They were now again around him, stepping with limbs that did not move, glancing with eyes that never winked, confusing him with the beings of the past which were yet a reflection of the present, and haunting and perplexing his new-born consciousness with a steadfast, but still a dreamy reality. He sought to sleep again ; and when the effort defeated itself, he attempted to think calmly and connectedly. But the face of Marguerite pursued him, and weighed like the nightmare on his wakened bosom ; for it was perpetually brought back to him by its imperfect resemblance to Victoria, and perhaps still more by a deep, though half-stifled foreboding, that he was himself the less accomplished and less devoted Antonio of a later age, and of a lovelier and more delightful mistress.

CHAPTER XXIV.

It was perfectly inevitable that, in the situation of the English exile, and with the character and habits which alone he had cultivated, his mind, however capable on some occasions of resolute decision, and generally prone to strong excitement, should become the prey of diseased fancies and depressing reveries. He had no necessary occupation—there was no object of hope before him; and his thoughts turned fiercely in upon themselves, or wandered feebly and with-

out purpose in any direction which promised even a momentary external interest. Books did not engage his attention; the loitering conversation and tranquil views of Father Jerome all but disgusted him; and every thing that he saw in the neighbouring country, when he passed beyond the grounds of the chateau, jarred against the memory of his former political opinions, and reminded him of his deep and still aching disappointments. Yet, when driven back upon himself, he did not meditate to any purpose on his own history and character; for sharp as was the impression of all his past life, and vivid as was his self-consciousness, his reflections did not shape themselves into any moral system, nor lead him to measure himself severely by any practical standard of duty.

For him the whole universe had been changed, the home which he had made for his mind remained no longer. His existence was like that of some solitary survivor from an annihilated world, retaining thought, but fixed for ever in a sphere which he is unfit to inhabit, and where, from the incapacity of his organs to apprehend its qualities, he is altogether powerless.

Thus disturbed and dissatisfied was the mind of the Englishman when, towards the close of an indolent and discontented day, he was startled by the entry of a carriage into the court-yard. The window at which he stood did not command a sight of the door-way; and he disliked to inquire who it was that had arrived, for his heart beat quick, with a foreboding that he might perhaps be on the point of

meeting Madame de Valence. With the agonizing incredulity proper to some tempers, he laboured to persuade himself that this was impossible, and that his waywardness, and violence at their parting in the statue-gallery, must have separated him from her for ever. Yet, at the next moment, he turned with a secret and passionate pleasure to the remembrance of her conduct during his imprisonment and illness; and the vivid image of the delight he should derive from again seeing her, served as a prophecy of its own realization. Every second added to his anxiety; he strode about the room, he stood still and listened; he threw himself into a chair, and closing his eyes, endeavoured to force his thoughts in some other direction. The only question from which he drew back in terror was the one

which he ought, above all, to have considered, that is, the probable result of a renewal of his intercourse with a woman who possessed so strong an influence over his emotions. A slight tap at the door promised him a solution of his doubts. The signal announced a servant, who gave him a note containing these words :

“ I have been sent hither by the government, and am not allowed to leave the chateau. I shall be happy to see you in a quarter of an hour.

VICTORIA.”

When he found himself alone, and had read these simple expressions, he held the paper to his lips, and before the quarter of an hour elapsed, he had studied every letter with the fondest and most devout curiosity. His hand trembled

when he laid it on the door which divided him from her. But he thought that he heard a low voice feebly articulate "come in;" and he flung it open, and hurried into the room.

This was a small oratory, partly wainscotted with dark wood, partly hung with a gloomy silk. The single and splendidly coloured window, threw a strange and broken light around Victoria; and, at the first moment, lent to her face a glow which did not belong to it; but which was instantly succeeded by a deep and natural flush. She had attempted to command her strength for this meeting, and when he came into her presence she stood before him firm and collected, and offered him her hand. He seized it, and covered it with kisses; and it was then that the blood rushed from her heart to

her countenance, and that she sank into a seat. She turned on him a glance that pierced into his soul as deeply as the source from which it drew its meaning lay in her own. She signed to him to sit down. He obeyed mechanically, and a pause followed.

He fixed his eyes on her, and drew an uneasy enjoyment from again contemplating the beauty he had before so much rejoiced to gaze at. The radiance of the eyes, the noble form and delicate colours of the brow and forehead remained as before. The lips were still blooming like a parted bud ; but her face was even paler than formerly, and he thought that he could trace, amid its Grecian lines, a fixed expression of grief and anxiety. At last she spoke. " All," she said, " is over. The few wise men in the country

are too weak to act. The friends of anarchy threatened to denounce two or three of them, unless I would leave Paris and confine myself to St. Ange. They fancied—these successors of Brutus and Padilla—that I had more courage than any other of their opponents. Alas! I believe I was only reckless.”

“ And is it possible,” he asked, “ that while you were encompassed by these difficulties, and thus exposed to peril, you could think of aggravating your evil fortune, by interfering to rescue me ?”

There was a tenderness in his utterance of this reproach, to which she could not be insensible. But she felt, also, that the terms on which they had last parted required from her some assertion of her own dignity; and she said that it had been easy to obtain his freedom,

and that the efforts she had made on his behalf were no more than she would have thought due to any foreigner of her acquaintance. In the manner with which she spoke this, there was something of assumed coldness, which acutely pained him. He implored her forgiveness for the frantic ingratitude of his behaviour towards her before his imprisonment. He told her how perilously he had tottered, in the delirium of that evening, on the edge of the grave ; asserted, and with truth, how close her image had lain to his heart, even during those bitter and tumultuous moments ; and reiterated, in the tones of earnest passion, that he longed for, cared for nothing on earth, but the love which he had once appeared to reject.

He spoke with accents of the deepest

affection, and she was touched by them the more because she had lately met with but little of such feelings. "If I may not believe you," she answered, "to whom living can I trust? All, all have successively disappointed my dearest hopes; the court, the nobles, the authors, the people,—constitutionalist and republican, Girondin and Montagnard, are alike erring and worthless. I now hope nothing for my country. Even they in whom I fancied that I might look for persevering friendship, have shrunk from me in the hour of difficulty and peril. I have lived to endure the ingratitude and indifference of those who, by my means, were raised to power; and the still more insolent and loathsome familiarity of conceited fools. Yes, my friend, I remained in that detestable city

till I saw myself contemned by men who once derived from me the means of subsistence; men who, while they were struggling from obscurity, and while I believed their views to be generous and beneficent, gained applause, by repeating in our assemblies the opinions, the very words, which they had heard me employ in conversation. When they had seized the wealth of the nation, and the axe of popular tyranny, into their own hands, the sordid pretenders talked to me of beauty and wit, aye, and even of love; and told me that I must leave politics to them, and let them plunder and proscribe without interruption."

He inquired who they were who had acted thus towards her? She discerned his emotion in his look, and replied, "Nay, leave them to the vengeance of

the future. They are bringing down an avalanche on their own heads. It is frantic to be thus disturbed at any thing they could say or do to me. As for France, the malady, fearful though it be, will have its way. Let us try to think no more of evils which we cannot remedy." He did not venture to look her in the face while he exclaimed, "There is then no longer aught to divide us."

From this time Victoria admitted him to her presence during many hours of every day. They drew and read together, and aided each other in examining the large and miscellaneous collection of books contained in the chateau; in looking for the wild or grotesque rarities of obsolete literature, or the old engravings and illuminations transmitted to us

by forgotten artists. There was something artificial in the zeal displayed by her for such pursuits. She seemed as if escaping eagerly from herself and her own heart, and was subject to frequent fits of depression, and even of bodily weakness. These she explained to Arthur, by reminding him of the anxieties and alarms she had undergone for a long time before her departure from Paris. It appeared natural that, to one in this condition, poetry the most plaintive, and the saddest tales of the ancient romances and chronicles, should give the greatest pleasure she experienced. The bare, bleak aspect of the earth, the winter's pale and stormy sunsets, were fitting accompaniments to her; and the melancholy harpings of the winds made concord with her feelings.

Sometimes, when she and Arthur, whom, though loving him with all her soul, she did not recognise as a lover, were sitting near each other, if his eyes had been fixed for a few seconds on a book or paper before him, and were then suddenly raised, he found that she was looking at him with a gaze of the most mournful inquiry. He would fain have asked her what unhappy meaning thus filled her countenance with an inexplicable sorrow. But he was always restrained by the profound, though unacknowledged consciousness, that he had in his own bosom thoughts and impulses which he wished to conceal from himself, and even to stifle, and which he never could confess to her.

Frequently, when he remembered how freely and strongly she had allowed him

to speak to her of his love, and how plainly she had avowed her attachment, it seemed strange to himself, that, with the words for ever on his lips, and the feeling incessant in his soul, he could not now repeat the same passionate supplication. He was restrained by the recollection of his conduct on the night of the second of September, which had abrogated his former privilege. Moreover, the rumours and suspicions of the licentiousness of Victoria after her husband's death, and before his own arrival in France, weighed down his spirits, and prevented him from addressing her with that respectful and unchangeable devotion, to which alone from him he could conceive that she would listen, and which he scarcely could assume, without being prepared to make her his wife.

From the thought of this he suddenly recoiled, when it happened to present itself to his mind; and the image of Isabel Barrington came uncalled, and interposed with all the look and voice of England between him and a foreign wedlock. But when, on the other hand, he attempted to regard Madame de Valence in the light in which he had seen her placed by others, and to think of her as one to whom he might lightly and laughingly whisper evil, and propose infamy in a jest, he could not for a moment connect the woman he knew and loved with her of whom he had heard those blighting reports. The blood hurried to his face, as it might if he had dreamed of dishonour befalling a mother or a sister. It was nothing to him that they who had thus slandered Victoria

had spoken of her shame with indifference or gaiety, as of that which detracted nothing from her worth; for he felt that the heart has a standard of its own not affected at all by the noisy vanities of the world's opinion.

Daily her conduct and manner lessened the impression made on him by what he had heard from others, and her image was invested with a severer purity. His affection became more absorbing and more impatient; he found an insane delight in multiplying through different forms of fancy his conception of the happiness from which he was shut out by an airy but impassable bar. Unnumbered pictures presented themselves to him, embodying the life which he longed to lead by her side, and surrounding it with the most beautiful accessories that

history and fable could furnish. In these dreams he figured himself as devoted under her inspiration to the enjoyment of external nature, to the love of antiquity and of poetry, and to the tranquil cultivation of all his faculties; and often invested them both with fanciful and exaggerated characters, placed in undiscovered and prodigious scenes, such as this earthly globe has never exhibited. But in the proportion in which he grew more eagerly fond of these cloudy hopes, in the same degree he was pained and disappointed by the want of unhesitating self-abandonment on her part. Yet it was remarkable and even perplexing to himself, when he ventured to glance at it, that although his projects embraced the whole of his future life, and included a constant gratification of the senses, the

fancy, the curiosity, and the affections, and this only in union with Victoria, and by means of her, the thought of an irrevocable bond between them startled and repelled him.

In spite, however, of these fluctuations and contradictions in the state of his mind, he delighted to seek for every employment which would draw them more familiarly together. He therefore proposed to instruct her in his native language, of which she already knew enough to follow the meaning of the easier authors. She grasped at the plan with an eagerness for which he could not account, and they immediately began their lessons. Every line gave her the hint for new questions with regard to England. She appeared to task her whole mind in obtaining information

about the country of her friend; not indeed on points of history or statistics, but on those of life, manners, habits, the arrangements of society, the aspect of nature, and the like. In such conversation she was happy to spend many hours of each successive day; and when her companion wandered away to any other topics, she was always impatient to lead him back among his native remembrances.

Often, and on many questions, he spoke with the harsh and dissatisfied tone of his former political opinions. He inveighed against the luxurious tyranny of the aristocracy, the rich monopoly of a lazy Church establishment, the greedy and vulgar spirit of the middle classes, and the wretched ignorance of their inferiors. But sometimes also he was hurried by

his recollections and his regret into another mode of description. He had occasion to allude to some splendid fragment of his country's former tale, or some spot which he had seen and loved, or friend dear to his heart was suggested to him. Then, without pausing to moralize, he spoke of thronged rivers and green and fertile plains, the hedges and coppice-woods he had haunted, the busy town, the cheerful village, the grey church-tower and noble minster. Or he told of persons he had known, of men sincere and upright; of women gentle, accomplished, and high-minded. But much of what she wished to understand, to him was dull or painful; and he could hardly conceive any reason for her pleasure in framing for herself an ample and accurate image of England, and felt inclined

to turn her attention, if possible, towards some other subject of inquiry.

This, however, he found impracticable. At last, after a long conversation, she said to him, that she knew her curiosity must weary him, but that she could not avoid feeling a deeper interest in his country than in any other. "I own," she continued, "that however strongly I may be persuaded of the iniquity of all present political systems, and the misery of all existing nations, I cannot think, without deep sympathy and pleasure, of the kind of life which, as I learn from your account, is led by many of the upper classes in England. Sometimes, I may indeed say very often, it seems to me that wealth and rank can do nothing but injure every one: I fancy that, to say the least, we calculate ill when we

fence ourselves in from the rough contact with daily duties; and that the hardness and lowliness even of a conventual life, if humility and self-denial could be enforced by any rule of discipline, would keep us in the healthiest condition. But there are feelings which I have not strength to overcome, and which prevent me from fostering views like these."

She paused for a moment. Arthur could not doubt that she alluded to her love for him, and he was deeply gratified that she had approached more nearly to a full confession of this attachment than for a considerable time before. But she appeared to be afraid of herself, and of what she had already said, and she went on rapidly to describe to him her conceptions on the subject of English life.

"There have been times," she said,

“when I could not have imagined myself as enduring existence without freer and more public habits of social intercourse than seem to be common in England. I used to think it essential to the enjoyment of every day that all should affect to devote themselves to the amusement of each other. I could not have supposed any mature civilization, unless where universal courtesy keeps open an arena, in which every one may have room for exhibiting his peculiar pretensions to applause. But I have become weary and desperate amid a life of conventional heartlessness and selfish refinement. I am disgusted with the constant excitements of vanity. Nor is there any source of happiness which I still greatly prize except permanent, tranquil, individual affections. These, I believe, are

more cherished in England than in France, Italy, or Spain. Your government, with all its faults, affords at least safety and quiet. A life, therefore, in your island, founded on the pure and unchanging attachments necessary to what you call a home, made respectable by fixed good conduct, by mental cultivation, and by benevolence, and graced with the ornaments of letters and of the fine arts, is the fairest vision that ever comes before my mind. The picture, in truth, glows before me so brightly, that the eyes of Hope are dazzled in attempting to contemplate it."

Knowing that she was right in her distrust of all the waking dreams which come through the ivory portal of self-flattery, she sighed while she dwelt upon the image of happiness which she had

raised. From beneath the stage whereon she was displaying the painted witchery of this unsubstantial scene, sounded a startling voice, and told her that she was wilfully cherishing delusions of enjoyment, and turning away from the unalterable and fateful aspect of conscience.

With Arthur the world was newer, and expectation more powerful. He was less inclined than Madame de Valence to compound his visions of any real materials, or connect them with any definite locality. Above all, the recollections of his native country were unpleasant to him, for they wanted the fascination of novelty, and the promise which belongs peculiarly to the unknown: they recalled the obligations imposed by his birth, property, and education, and all, in fine, which he owed to others and to himself.

Every thing vague, strange, and distant had a charm for him ; and he felt enthusiastic delight while he thought of Victoria in association with such pictures. He mused of inhabiting with her the green depths of forests, where every autumn since the deluge has scattered on the soil a new surface of never-trodden leaves ; of looking out beside her from dim and enormous caverns, in primeval mountains, on a black barrier of ocean that never sustained a keel ; of dwelling in a palace, guarded by unnumbered leagues of sand, enfolding but that one vernal oasis, and where, amid the splendours of eastern fable and magic, he and the queen of his imagination should be served by unseen genii. Sometimes he turned again, to dream of burying themselves in the silence of the

past, and penetrating from subterranean hall to hall through a world of antediluvian architecture, and beholding pageant after pageant of symbolic mystery ; or in one of his million modes of plastic idleness, he conceived some inexplicable force, which should lift suddenly from the earth both him and her, and bear them to a region of sunless light and incorporeal appearances.

These were but airy and transitory fancies ; and his mind came back to the consideration of his real position only the more weary and fastidious. He reverted with pain to the actual state of all around him, and to the undefined and dangerous relation in which he stood to Madame de Valence. It occurred to him that some extraordinary and sorrowful catastrophe impended over a passion

that united persons so unexpectedly brought together, that had begun and now continued in the midst of circumstances so singular, and that appeared doomed to misfortune by the same terrible destiny which then shook the world.

This state of things could not endure for many days. Arthur became irritable and unwell. His manner, now languid and now abrupt, his steps hurried or faltering, and the increasing paleness of his cheek, were obvious to all, and gave exquisite pain to Victoria. She was the more deeply touched by these symptoms of disordered health and an uneasy mind, because the sufferer attempted, as far as possible, to conceal the appearances which distressed her; but at length their hearts were opened to each other. She

had commonly retired from his society at the sunset of each winter's day ; but after a brief residence at St. Ange, she became, on one stormy and howling evening, so anxious as to his condition, from perceiving the difficulty and irregularity of his breathing, and the feverish excitement which agitated his feeble frame, that she determined to remain beside him. He answered, carelessly, several of her questions, until she grasped his burning hands, and implored him—him who was dearer to her than all she had longest known and loved most deeply, to tell her by what secret and devouring grief his life was thus made desolate. The long accumulated thoughts and emotions now burst through their artificial boundary, like pent-up and gathered waters through an embankment of snow.

He had spoken to her but for a few moments, when she fell sobbing on his neck, and he clasped her in his arms.

CHAPTER XXV.

HENCEFORTH the manner of Victoria towards Arthur was very different from what it had been at any time before. She had now no appearance of pride or superiority, but seemed to take for granted that she was bound to obey, without a moment's pause, the slightest intimation of his wishes. Every tone and look indicated that she had altogether surrendered herself to him. His vanity and his love were alike incessantly gratified by her active and devoted submission.

To him all remembrances of England, and all sober calculations for the future, were full of pain. They both naturally avoided to speak of the recent and terrible events of the French Revolution, which would recal to them not merely so much of positive evil, but the disappointment of their own long trains of hope, and almost religious confidence. Thus they were led to converse of the earlier life of Victoria, of the few shining years which she had spent in the gayest and haughtiest circles of the court, and of the later and still shorter time during which she had more sedulously employed herself in the cultivation of the arts and of society, among the most celebrated persons of Paris and of Europe.

All that she said inevitably brought before him with greater distinctness the

preeminence of her position in one of the world's chief communities. He sat or moved beside her with new delight, and lived with eager sympathy on her accents, while she involuntarily reminded him that so remarkable and admired a being now existed only for him. Except so far as he was interested in them, these recollections seemed scarcely to afford her any pleasure. So long as he liked to listen, she spoke of them with fluency and vivacity; and in this, as in all else, she gave him the triumph of feeling that her whole life was now but a reflection of his.

Her affection was profound, sometimes even to melancholy: his was rather a vehement and precipitate passion. While yielding entirely to her love, she seemed to perceive all the consequences of her

actions, and, for the sake of her lover, deliberately to undergo a destiny from which she had not resolution to escape. She knew that her conduct must end in misery, or rather involved it. But her only source of happiness was her attachment to Arthur; and she had no desire but to give this its full scope, to cherish it to the utmost, and then die.

With him the impetuosity of his emotions left little leisure for reflection or forethought. The previous failure of his many hopes, and his weariness of life, rendered the stir and hurry of this self-oblivious intoxication an exquisite and absorbing delight. He felt himself transmuted into a new being when he had again before him an object of concern, pursuit, and devotion. Satisfying his headlong wishes, and enjoying the sym-

pathy of a woman so fond, lovely, and gifted as Victoria, he easily persuaded himself that the poisonous pleasure of these gratifications was more healthy than his previous inanition and discontent.

For days, nay weeks, their love continued fervent and keenly happy as at first. While a storm of misfortune swept around them, each had a secure nest in the other's heart. Their former state of uncertainty and discomfort gave an additional sweetness to the attachment that now united them. The intellectual powers of both, their accomplishments, information, and tastes, all were in a high degree congenial ; and both enjoyed the swelling consciousness of a more intimate and overmastering affection than either had known before, however that

feeling was darkened in Victoria by self-reproach and dim foreboding.

The year advanced, and peril deepened over France with the darkening and closing season. The paths around St. Ange were thickly strown with leaves. The branches and grass were clothed in sparkling frost-work ; and the statues and ornaments of the fountains were armed and fringed with icicles. The wind blew shrilly through the woods, and swept with a dreary cadence round those ancient turrets. Still, amid the repulsive weather and their lonely retirement, the lovers attempted to persuade each other that they had spring-time and festivity in their breasts. But the light heart of innocence was not there : and they were united by the cravings of a feverish excitement which perpetually

reproduced itself in each by contagion from the other.

Gradually, however, he began to long for he knew not what. His spirits grew heavy, his blood lingered in his veins. From weariness of himself he sought Victoria; and when with her, all the fondness that she loved to manifest disturbed and almost irritated him; for it made him more and more conscious that he had joined himself to her, and that he was forbidden to look beyond the circle which she had traced around him. She appeared to observe this discontent and peevishness only as a proof that he must be unwell. But her anxiety in inquiring as to his health, and her zeal in proposing that he should attend to it more carefully, were new sources of annoyance.

He was one day surprised by receiving

from her a packet, which she said had just arrived from Paris. It enclosed, as she informed him, various papers which had been seized in his apartment at the time of his arrest, and out of which the agents of the government had endeavoured to extract evidence against him. She had made strenuous efforts to procure these writings at the time of his liberation, and being unsuccessful, had left directions with a person in her employment, to continue to claim them after her departure from Paris. The object had been gained by bribing two or three clerks, and she had thus the pleasure of restoring his property to her lover. The box contained a few letters, fragments of a journal, notes of speeches, and one or two memorandum-books, in which Arthur had at different times inserted hastily

any detached thoughts and images that occurred to him. These were strongly marked with the peculiarities of his disposition, and the wild erroneousness of his moral and political theories, mingled with traces of more just reflection, and hints of sober truth. A few pages selected from them, will give a clearer view of what had been his opinions and character, than could be obtained by any other means.

“ Sometimes, in moments of depression, Nature appears to me a vast body of water, which for ever encroaches on its own icy shores, and melts them away. On them are seen the million shapes of individual existence, from the leaf and the grain of sand, to man, each in turn devoured and lost in the advancing waves

of that ocean, which they all swell with the same substance as its own. On the opposite verge to that on which I am placed, the surf is congealing, perhaps, into strand, and forming, as it hardens, innumerable modes of being, each to last but for a day, and be again absorbed and diffused in the returning tide."

"Every man must have asked himself whether, in the immense system of decay and reproduction which constitutes the world, and every single human life, there is nothing stable and unperishing? Yes, I answer; there is in the mind a nucleus of thought, a vital point, the seat of reason and of consciousness, in which every man may exult as in an indestructible heritage, and which offers to the philanthropist a sure foundation for his

fabric of universal happiness. Amid fallacious meteors and unsteady clouds, there is one fixed star that never eludes us."

" I cannot conceive by what sophistry the powerful, the wealthy, and instructed, persuade themselves to regard with indifference the condition of the great mass of mankind. Many hundreds of millions of men are groaning under despotism, chained and unnerved by superstition, and wakened daily from the sleep of exhaustion, to find their nightmares realised, and that above them hangs the sabre, while the gulf of famine opens below. All that they retain which distinguishes them from the brutes, is a more various and extensive capacity of suffering. Even in Europe, do we not

see that, while a few are surfeited with elegant and luxurious enjoyments, the multitude are left to plod and endure, to struggle and to perish, without knowledge or refinement, the sympathy of others, or their own respect? Yet we, who behold all this, and are enriched by these heart-wasting labours, eat, drink, loiter through the day, and sleep without starting, as if the groans of uncounted legions of human souls, and the echoes of their weary footsteps over the graves of all the miserable generations of their fathers, were delicate and lulling music."

"That which makes our view of the present state of the world a source of perplexity and horror, is the consideration, that every human heart bears in itself a type, more or less distinct, of

those powers and that happiness which have been the portion of the most exalted minds. There is, perhaps, no spot on earth, however dreary, in which the germs of many plants, and the larvæ of shining and light-winged insects, are not hidden, though for thousands of years undeveloped, and still expecting the warm breeze that shall call them out in life and beauty."

"As we have hitherto never learned to what pitch of social and individual improvement the mass of mankind may be raised; so it is also probable, that even the noblest recorded minds cannot enable us to form a just conception of the hidden force and susceptibility of human nature. Even in this early morning of time, our race are visited by prophetic dreams,

dimly blending themselves with reality. They foretell glories yet unrevealed, and awful powers, before which the results of all ordinary experience sink into contempt. Who is there who has not perceived in his own mind strange parallelisms, oracular emotions, the dark and embryotic stirrings of an inner life, which, when the senses are suspended, replaces their functions by some invisible agency? Who has not known that magical consciousness, which seems to have belonged to us before our birth, and to have foreseen whatever we have undergone or done, and which is probably still more significant as an intimation of the future, than as a tradition of the past?

“ I do not know why either the earliest condition of man, or that to which

he may aspire, should be represented as composed of elements which we have no experience of. It seems to me, that we may justly conceive both as dignified and blessed by the highest cultivation of all our faculties. It is possible, indeed, that neither books, nor pictures, nor musical instruments such as ours, existed in Paradise or will be found in Heaven: but all the enjoyment that they furnish may be imagined as obtained through other means. The mind requires only space in which to expand itself unrestrained."

" I make little question, that could we shake off the effects of custom and education, and the debasement and blindness produced by traditional prejudices and

bad institutions, our eyes would be unsealed to discern around us the system of spiritual beings now invisible, by whose breath the beauty of the world is nourished—who are the life of all that seems to us dead—the soul of all that we think unconscious—who wait on every movement of our frames—vibrate, wheel, and marshal their airy squadrons in harmony with all our thoughts, and through whom, as through an animated atmosphere, filling, covering, and penetrating the universe—every sensation that stirs this earthly sphere is propagated; and the feelings of the poet and the sage produce a sympathetic tremor in all the infinite creation.”

“ We seek, in the most remote regions of speculation, for splendid and beautiful

images, and for striking thoughts; but I know not any conception so serious and so affecting as that of our own being. How complex, how profound, how astonishing a subject of contemplation is a single life! Oh, if the rulers and the rich men of this world would bring before themselves, but for a moment, the many attributes and the divine essence of that idea! how would they not shudder at their own deeds, and their own neglect:—so many sufferings inflicted; so many sources of enjoyment choked and polluted; and so much laboriously perpetrated to extinguish the luminary placed by God in the cell of the meanest and darkest bosom!”

“ If I were to fix on the one great error, which has been the root of more

numerous scions than any other, I should say that it is the dogma by which virtue is represented as a painful struggle, and the duties of men are opposed to their natural inclinations. It has been the main engine in the hands of those who, distrusting the coarser means of power, have rooted their authority in the minds of their vassals. The argument is plain and unanswerable, that if men are instinctively prone to evil, guidance, if not restraint, is necessary to their welfare. But once show to the bulk of men, that goodness is far easier and lovelier than wickedness, and that evil derives its whole support from the barriers pretended to be raised against it, and the walls of our prison-house will vanish like the curtains of a tent when drawn aside, and man will find himself the free and

happy inhabitant of the magnificent inheritance from which he has been so long shut out."

"Lo ! God's fair earth—around it plays
The waving woof of nights and days,
Of starry shade, and noon-tide blaze.

While fast the morning mist retires,
Behold the mountains' frozen spires,
And woods alive with verdant fires.

Each from its lonely rock-built urn,
Grey rivers flow, to ocean's bourne,
For ever flow, and ne'er return.

O'er wide, unbroken, grassy meads,
As cloud before the whirlwind speeds,
Rush the wild troop of reinless steeds ;

Till on the foamy beach they stand,
And start as if they scorned the land,
And snuff the gale, and spurn the sand.

There spreads that other billowy clime,
Restless, obscure, immense, sublime,
The eldest awful birth of time.

But who is he, the spectral form,
That bent by no external storm,
Bows o'er the soil his tears make warm ?

Art thou the destined lord of all
This bright and variegated ball,
Its trembling, pining, wretched thrall?

Nature for ever cries to thee,
Slave of the dust, awake, be free!
The heir of all thine eyes can see.

Affrighted, torpid, blind no more,
For hope, love, fancy, wisdom's lore,
For God himself, thy heart explore.

Nor longer live earth's human mole,
But finding truth within thy soul,
Disdain each meaner power's control."

"An oppressive government at once puts the life of the citizen in danger from violence, and denies him the means of subsistence. It hangs over him the sword of Damocles; but the banquet that it places before him is that of Tantalus."

"The ice-foliage on a window-pane is a poor exchange for the verdure of the

forest, which we should see through the lattice, had not the frost destroyed it. Such are the substitutes which misgovernment and prejudice furnish for the natural and healthy enjoyments of man."

"He who has well considered the rights of men, and the crimes that have been committed to pervert their minds, will be cautious how he feels contempt for any one, but the tyrant and the teacher of falsehood; him who wields the sword of oppression, and him who blows the trumpet for the assault on the innocent."

"An eastern prince was defeated, taken prisoner, and about to be put to death, when a dervish approached him and said, 'Because of thy pride hast

thou fallen. Hadst thou been humble, and fixed thine eyes on the earth from which thou camest, and to which thou must return, thou wouldest have seen the worm that shelters itself in its hole, and is passed by unmolested. In thy haughtiness thou didst look up, and sawest the spider on thy gilded ceiling, weaving its web to make a prey of the innoxious flies. Behold, thou and thy web are swept away. Hadst thou looked on the ground, thou wouldest have read the text of wisdom, wrought in mosaic on the marble floor, and thy heart would have been humbled. But thou didst lift thine eyes to the high roof on which thy titles of honour and the praises given thee by thy flatterers were painted, and thy soul was filled with arrogance. Lo ! the pavement has

opened to swallow thee, and the dome has fallen and crushed thee; and if I, too, would not perish, I must fly from the ruins of thy glory.' ”

“ I have read, that the hopeful star which appeared at the birth of Christ, journeyed into the depths of heaven until his crucifixion; and that at his descent into Hades, it became visible to the imprisoned spirits. The firmament which covers that dark empire is of glowing fire; and it, too, has its sable stars, that rise and set, and mock the myriads of sleepless watchers with ominous conjunctions. Through a chasm in that dreary dome the single celestial luminary shines. It is the cynosure of hell, and alone draws the eyes of the captives from the dim sights of menace and torture

that surround them. It glitters, and keeps watch, like the archangel appointed as their warden; and it reminds them that there are other regions of the universe than theirs; that a future still awaits them. But when the mountains and ocean are rolled away into the abyss of space, and the trembling legions rise, like clouds before the gale, into the presence of God, that star shall precede them; and when the doom of the creation is pronounced, shall be absorbed into the splendours of the Messiah's throne, and there burn for ever. Such a light of terror to the wrong-doer and oppressor, of promise and comfort to mankind, are the principles of truth and equal justice, on which philanthropists now seek to build the happiness of society."


“ The writings of the best political philosophers before our own time are mines cold, dark, and deep, with some gold at the bottom, much rubbish, and mephitic air.”

“ In the old mythology, Hercules was the deliverer of Prometheus ; and in the barbarous societies, which alone have hitherto existed, how often has brute strength been the only refuge of those whose natural tendencies are all towards the ideal, the moral, the invisible world ? It is better so than that Force and Violence should persecute and chain the divine Prometheus.”

“ I have often thought that poetry gives the kind of transparent colouring to our thoughts and to images of nature

which a landscape wears when reflected in deep and clear water. We see through that fine medium, hills, woods, and sky, battlement and spire, the labourers in the harvest-field, and the winding troop of cavaliers. But with these are mingled, in magical unity, the plants, shells, and rocks, and the living creatures of that crystal region, and the sunken fragments of human magnificence, which it has made its own. All are tinted, modified, harmonized, refined; and all have an aspect of tranquillity, which allures the soul to leave its wearisome and stony pathway, and dwell in those serene depths."


"A pyramid, with its blind immensity, at once suggests that it is designed as a tomb of some deified priestly conqueror;



and a ruined amphitheatre is an exciting memorial of the regal populace that filled it. But a cathedral of the middle ages is as rich as they, in the sources of feeling appropriate to it; and that feeling how far more elevated than those produced by any other human structure! The Gothic building substantiates and makes visible the poetry of religion, all, that is, which it includes of best, freest, and most elevating. I have gazed down some dark aisle, until I have fancied that a beaming angel from the pictured glass would leave its home of light, and conduct me through that vista to a place of supernatural wonders, more fit to swell the heart and chain the tongue than those beheld by Dante. When I have seen some small side-door unclosed, and the sharp noon-light shoot into that world

of still and coloured shadows, I have thought that it needs must pour on the eye, from some retreat of forest and mountain, as beautiful as a haunt of the early Christians in the recesses of Asia Minor. I have watched the lofty arches and their glowing and many-tinted windows, with faith so intent and so devout, that at the first note of the organ I believed the light would burst from them as from new-created suns, the earthly fabric disappear, and the inconceivable acts and overpowering personages of the Last Judgment open on the eyes of the prostrate worshipper."

"A fine anthem on the organ sounds to me like a cathedral expressed in music. The peals deep and strong as a deluge—the revolving cycles of sphere-



like melody—the lyric aspiration—the solemn fulness and grandeur of the whole, immense and complex as if it were itself a universe—have, in my feelings, no faint analogy to the dim, long aisles, the mighty vaults, the broken and mysterious lights, and all the intricate, yet sublime appearances, of the ancient Christian church.”

“There are two modes in which music may be, I think, inexpressibly affecting. The first, when aided by all the other arts, it supplies the noblest vehicle of imagination and passion, and breathing its harmonious atmosphere around the consecrated isle of poetry, gives language to the feelings of the exalted mortals, its sole inhabitants. The other, when one tender, ardent soul pours forth, in

unaccompanied melody, the thousand delicious, secret emotions, which it could never have confided to any other heart in the cold and literal medium of conversation or writing."

"The great and irresistible combination of all the arts, fused into melody, was, I think, the highest spiritual power known to the Greeks, and was the noblest influence employed by them in education. Their simple and austere music was aided and enriched by the co-operation of painting, sculpture, pantomime, and, above all, poetry, and the associations of a poetical religion. Human cultivation separates and improves every thing; but, in its most perfect forms, we sometimes miss the effect of old produced by the union of many inferior

elements. It has done its utmost to advance the art in which alone, probably, we much excel the lyrical worshippers of Apollo. And although the earth will never again enjoy such a triumph of genius as those which, in the theatre and the festival, enraptured the contemporaries of Aspasia and Euripides, the want is perhaps supplied by the wondrous harmonies of modern composers, in which music is alone sufficient to make a creation for itself, animated with all the powers which were formerly derived from so many different outward sources."

"There is I know not what spell in sweet music to open gently the golden gates of the senses, and to transport us into another world. I can imagine a

Paradise, of which the only material should be colour, or form, or language; but it oftenest occurs to me as a sphere of music, in which the soul should float along the current of delight, from the first flute-like breathings at the portal to the full swell of the cherubic choir, echoed by the deepest strains of every region of nature, and harmonized by the brooding presence of the Deity."

"The wise man looks at the pages of history with the feeling of the professor of a pure religion, when beholding the images of some bloody and absurd system of idolatry. They are of terrific features, and glitter with jewels; but instead of inclining to worship them, he reflects how foul is the debasement from which his better creed has saved him."

“The Egyptians do not seem to have been living men so much as blind, imperfect agents, constructing, like some insects, a temporary tomb, and the cradle of an existence not yet developed. How characteristic of this people are the sepulchres and pyramids, monuments dream-like in all but their massiveness, and recalling those who felt their being but as a dream, and who wished to give its visions a solidity and permanence that might preserve them until their own awakening.”

“I never think of the Athenians but as a troop of sportful children; some of them with weighty brows, and souls in which the unseen spirit of love and power is gently vivifying a fresh creation; some of them whose eyes glance like

meteors, and pour around the light of poetry; some playing with the loftiest images of art as if with shells and rose-leaves; some at the sorcery of whose eloquence the storm-cloud swells and wavers over Greece and Asia, painted with rainbows and alive with thunder; an infant troop with the loveliness of gods, and the earth-born strength of Cyclops, yet all, in all things, animated by a vital force and impetuous youth, more natural to winged and ephemeral creatures of the elements than to the offspring of our weary and abused earth. They were a splendid race, whose memory is imperishable, and who yet looked forward but little; for, endowed with capacious and agile intellect, they used it not to fix on lasting ends, but to secure and adorn the triumph of their impulses.

Yet I shudder to think that such a people were in number but some thousands, arbiters of the fate of as many myriads of slaves."

"In such a community as Athens it is impossible to suppose that the authority of a Pericles, or an Alcibiades, had any similarity to that of a modern despotic usurper. Naturally, as the fairest woman leads the procession to the gods, as the elm and pine lift themselves above the bushes, so the greatest mind rises and enthrones itself. The rose-tree does not complain that the beauty and fragrance of its flowers are usurped from the leaves, the stem, and thorns; nay, the appearance of the rich buds is the evidence and result of the health and vigour of the parent plant."

“Rome appears to me a spacious and deeply founded building, adorned with the spoils of all the world. In its dungeons, kings and chiefs, and every illustrious enemy, languish and die. In its long galleries, troops of captives wear away their days with tears and toil ; in its courts, they are compelled to stake their lives against each other, or against the beasts of the desert. How is this weight of horrors lightened by my knowledge that in the centre of the pile are a temple of vestals, a synod of lawgivers, and the thrones of consuls and dictators ; or, that on its towers and pinnacles the shades of its mighty citizens are seen in awful pomp, grave, proud, silent, triumphant, and unpitying ? The rule of Cæsar was no more unjust, and far less barbarous, than those fierce laws and merciless heroes.”

“ The annals of the Roman Commonwealth are, for many ages, the main stream of human history. Under eastern despotism nothing is visible but vast, pestilential marshes; in other regions the waters flow in filthy channels and ditches. But they pour their full current through that deep and widening bed, and receive, on all hands, the tributary rivers of the world.”

“ Tacitus has built the monument, and inscribed the epitaph, of Roman liberty and greatness; and we fancy that we see, while that majestic spirit carries on his labour, innumerable foul and bloody shapes, some with imperial crowns, and many with the dust of slavish degradation on their brows, busy to deride and oppose him. But the noblest sepulchral

ornament is the marble form of the historian himself, seated on the tomb, and looking, with fixed indignant grief, at the prostrate image of his country, which bears the likeness of Pætus Thræsea."

"The force that moved the Roman empire presents itself to me as an active reptile, making a secure and constant progress along the ground. It slept at last, and was apparently an inanimate grub; but awoke again, and rose with wings into the air, and Rome became Christendom.

TO MY COUSIN ISABEL.

Fair, simple girl, when by thy side
I walk at early morn,
Through covert dim, and meadow wide,
And copse of blooming thorn ;

Methinks with thee, my sylvan maid,
'Twere happiness to dwell,
Where boughs o'er-arch the lonely glade,
Where gleams the Fairy's well :

To see the gorgeous pheasant rush
On whirring wings along,
And hear thee teach the gurgling thrush
To trill a sweeter song :

To watch with joy whatever lives
Of earth's unnumbered kinds,
And from each tone their nature gives,
With music feed our minds :

To love, with hearts nor vexed nor proud,
The year's decline and spring,
The airy world of moving cloud,
The greenwood's murmuring.

And when old age, serene and wise,
Had worn our locks away,
To shade each other's smiling eyes
With leaves and flowers of May.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE feelings with which Arthur regarded these relics of his former mind, were as melancholy as his who surveys the fragments of his home, when its turrets have been hurled from their base by an earthquake, and the tapestry of his familiar chambers scattered by tempest. But with his sorrows were mingled self-reproach and remorse, the poisonous drop in a draught of bitterness. He could now scarcely imagine the mood in which he had written those records,

sentences brightened in every line by the sunny witcheries of hope. They still glowed before his view, but with a light that scorched his eye-balls.

Victoria, who had left him to examine his manuscripts in solitude, found him at her return with his hands clasped on the table, and the note-book lying on the floor. She picked it up, and seated herself near him, but he did not speak to her for several minutes, and he then said, "Nothing is left in this world to a man who, having felt as I did then, is so outwitted by fools, so mocked by destiny as I."

"If such," she thought, "are your reflections, what must be those of the woman who has resigned herself to you?" But she said nothing, and, in order to conceal her countenance from

him, turned away and looked at some of the sentences by which he had been so agitated. She, too, was deeply affected by them, and by all that they recalled to her, and, approaching her face to his, said, in a faltering voice: "Dearest, we were much deceived, and we have suffered much, but surely something remains to you worth living for so long as we are secure of each other's love." He kissed her mournfully, and pressed her in his arms; but it was not long before he drew together the papers she had procured for him, and left the room. His first impulse, when he found himself alone, was to throw them into the fire, but before they were half consumed he rescued them from destruction. No interposing power had preserved in his mind any portion of

the thoughts and hopes recorded on those blackened and mutilated pages. He never again spoke to Victoria of the writings that had, by her means alone, been returned to him. And she suffered too painfully from his sufferings to recall a subject so fertile of distress.

It would be vain to pursue the succession of idle and bubbling eddies in the dark current of their united lives, steadily and surely flowing onward, but to what termination neither of them dared very boldly consider. It is a cheerless task to describe the vapid and precarious enjoyments of the guilty, the empty consolations of the disappointed, and the despair of two young hearts, whose very love was a source not of hope but apprehension.

Week after week dragged on, while

the spirits of Victoria sank, and the temper of Arthur became more irritable. He was glad of excuses for withdrawing from her society ; while away from her he consumed himself in listlessness and self-reproach, and when he returned to her side his gleams of tenderness were separated by long fits of gloom. Still, when her looks and silence expressed her overpowering sorrow, he could scarcely refrain from tears, and he endeavoured to bring her back to cheerfulness either by vehement protestations of his love and gratitude, or by entering cordially into any occupation which seemed likely to interest her, or by the discussion of some topic which he remembered her to have before suggested.

Her study of English had enabled her to understand Shakspeare with more

facility than before ; and to read his works in company with her lover was one of her favourite employments. Their tastes and views with regard to these poems, of course differed considerably, but they could comprehend each other, and Victoria was fond of conversing on the subject apparently, because it was unconnected with her own situation. The substance of her most characteristic remarks may be stated in a few sentences, which exhibit much more of her personal feelings than she designed to convey in them.

“ I have no doubt that the constant representation of Shakspeare’s plays, and the admiration of a thoughtful people, must have given rise in England to innumerable criticisms on his merit as an author. Of this I can scarcely pretend

to form an opinion. But the man himself fills me with an earnest desire to penetrate and comprehend his character. At first, I saw in him only the most eloquent and fanciful of poets: but I have more lately learnt to consider his writings as a great sea, in which the secret of the world lies buried; and gradually, while I kept watch upon the shore, I seemed to hear, in the heavings of that deep flood, prophetic words, and truth resounding in broken thunders. In studying these works, I have been led to reflect, that every human being has two existences, the one in relation to others, and to his circumstances; the other, in and for himself. It is this inward and seminal humanity which in every man is to me the main object of interest. In it alone do I see our lasting,

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universal, and primal nature ; and although I may admire the manners, the drapery, and external peculiarities, of the personages in a poem, it is by this spiritual essence alone that they can win their share of deeper and stronger affection. I am often led still farther than this ; and, tracing the stream of a poet's thought to its secret fountains, look in the imaginary beings for every indication of the first principles of their author's mind. It is in this point of view that Hamlet rouses and attracts me more than all the other works of Shakspeare, for in it I find the best evidence of his own views and disposition. The ' Midsummer Night's Dream ' exactly answers to its title ; and I doubt not that in his early life, and during solitary walks through the woods, he may have been occupied

by many such painted reveries. 'Romeo and Juliet' arises from the waking ecstasy of the same age: in it we see the pale bridal blossom joined to a flower of dark-bright crimson hue, and intoxicating perfume, gathered at twilight from the lovers' grave. As with these, so is it with the other plays; in all, I think I can perceive a mind of amazing power, working at the roots of its own productions, and nourishing them with its vital juices.

"But from all this region, where nature and magic co-operate, 'Hamlet' stands apart. He is not so much a man as an originating force, endowed with personality, such as antiquity fabled its elder gods. He surrounds his own solitary existence with all those images, circumstances, subordinate beings, and

awful wonders, which encircle indeed, and darken him, but of which he is the superhuman parent. They are inferior things, and of another race. He is the Prometheus of the modern world, and, like Prometheus, the magnified representative of the thoughts, passions, misgivings, and moral instincts of the individual soul. All around him exist but in relation to him, and vary in their importance according to the flux and reflux of his mind. The strong winds of his thoughts blow over the sensitive harp-strings of his organization; and at each startling and pealing note, the different forms of being flit before us, and vanish in turn as the strain changes. I leave it to others to catalogue and anatomise the circumstances in which he is placed, and to which they may

choose to attribute the singularities of his character. To me, it is evident that Shakspeare caught up the incidents of an idle tale as means for displaying that one mind, caring for them as little as the geometrician for the figure that he traces in order to explain his reasonings. That heir to a dreadful crown, and to regal purples dyed in the blood of his parent, is indeed princely, beautiful, valiant, and courteous; but, above all, a man: and it is his part to meditate, amid an imperial den of crime, on the laws that fix the place of his species in the universe, and that govern his human destiny.

“Hamlet is first presented to us labouring under the affliction of his father’s death, and indignant at his mother’s heartless levity. Then comes the mid-

night spectre, whose appearance at once breaks through the crust of indifference on the gravest and most awful subjects, and sets free the benumbed understanding, to speculate on the causes and varieties of existence. It changes the son's perplexity into horror; and he, who has held intercourse with a disembodied spirit, is thenceforth separated from all the crowd of living men. It is this incident which throws down the boundary between sense and imagination, and raises for us a cloudy bridge to the worlds scattered through infinite ether, which have an unseen, electrical connexion with our own hearts. The state of mind which it produces in Hamlet is naturally mistaken for madness by many persons of our time, as it was by the courtiers of Denmark: for it is that mood

in which, forced out of the routine of custom, we begin to ask ourselves, where and what are we?—whence did we come hither, and of what stuff are our lives composed? In this agitating inquiry, in the anguish with which his mother's infamy afflicts one who had so loved his parents, and in the simultaneous anxiety and distress produced by the altered mien of Ophelia, he casts off the excess of his emotions, by the utterance of those strange and piercing sarcasms, those deadly trifles, which so puzzle and so sting the murderous and hollow spirits of his father's palace. When the reality of every thing around him seems shaken, when he is driven to doubt the certainty of the past, and a black cloud of fate, encircling his own head, appears about to open, and to cover all the future with

destruction, his very love becomes a dream, sweeter indeed, and gentler, than his night-mare visions, but as little to be relied on. His confidence in all men, and in all affections, has been violently uprooted; and inextinguishable tenderness is mingled with freezing scepticism, when he contemplates the young, smooth brow that he had doted on so fondly. How could the man, whose faith in his mother was blasted, repose a secure trust in the attachment and purity of any woman? Yet his love is evident in every word he says to the daughter of Polonius; and, above all, in the terrific burst of scorn with which, at her grave, he treats her brother's pretensions to have felt a greater interest in her than he. Only, however, during his moments of solitude, he breathes in whispers the

whole agony of his desolate soul. He feels that he is chained on a rock, amid a deluge which covers all that he holds dear, and his bonds prevent him from plunging into the waves, and either floating to some shore beyond the horizon, or sinking for ever in that "sea of troubles.

"Throughout the blotted story of his life, it is his will that fails him. In all accomplishments, he is acknowledged sovereign; in all good affections, perfected and fixed; in speculative wisdom, deeper and farther-seeing than any cell-bound sage. But his will, the man within the heart, is insufficient to create a visible and active life, corresponding with the purport of his meditations; and not having within himself this fountain and first principle of reality, what wonder is

it that his conscience is a source but of reproaches, and he loses himself in the void of thought in which he might have impeded his wings for manly exertion. Nay, it is by his wings, and not in spite of them, that he perishes, as it is by them that a fly is entangled in the web of a spider.

“It is from regarding Shakspeare’s characters in this light that I seem to become acquainted with him. The blaze of declamatory panegyric, the scenic illumination surrounding the shade of the poet, while it displays the grace of the outline, and the richness of the attributes, dims and conceals the lamp within the breast, which alone can show the structure and movements of the man, is the true light of his spirit, and can enable us to discern the nature of the creation

that he has called into being. To my eyes it is clear, that he is willing in the greater number of his plays, to move without complaint around the circle of men's ordinary life and interests, transmuting all to poetry. But in these the inspired lips are silent on the great problems of man's destination, which have given rise in many a mind, and probably in his, to a feeling of unappeasable restlessness and anxiety, though hardly, perhaps, amounting to an intellectual doubt, and very remote from disbelief in religion. But in Hamlet, and in a few fragments of other works, he has laid open all the longings, the tremblings, the over-shadowed hopes of his inmost bosom, and those self-questionings, which are especially characteristic of the man, proceeding from the consciousness of a

will inadequate to guide the vast machinery of his meditations and affections. Yet, feeling a certain hollowness and insecurity in all the uses and enjoyments of the world, and in its very constitution, as in the fruits and turf of an orchard with a chasm beneath its surface, he is never disposed to reject those laws of morality which he knows to be insufficient. How delicate and true are his women ; how manly and honest his men ; how genial and unaffected his relish of all natural pleasures, and of the loveliness of earth ; how mild and benignant his philosophy ! And all these charms, and this inestimable worth, are the more solemnly precious, from our conviction that the mind they belong to is deeply stirred and saddened in its recesses by those tumults, of which so little trace

is seen above. O! poet, wonderful and beloved, who can attempt to fathom the depths of your spirit? And who can quarrel with his doom, who feels that the secrets of his throbbing bosom are akin to the mighty difficulties from which even your genius could not set you free?"

These, and similar remarks, were seldom acquiesced in by Arthur. "I have long thought," he was wont to say, "that human life appears in these poems with the same kind of resemblance to the original, as that of some hero of romance to his father, who has been favoured with the love of a goddess. The features of the mortal sire are raised, refined, and illuminated in the son, by the celestial nature of the other parent. But fair and grand as is the living commonwealth and

hierarchy of the Shakspearian drama, the pervading strain of human infirmity, which attracts and rivets your sympathy, fills me with a feeling of discontent and alienation."

Such conversations as these occupied some hours of several days, during which Victoria was rapidly becoming thin, pale, and weak, to a degree that often shocked him. It was also remarkable that she was rendered uneasy by any reference to their situation as lover and mistress, and shrank from his slightest caresses. One morning he observed her returning from early mass, and asked her, with some petulance, what pleasure she could derive from such a ceremony? She replied by a broken and agitated reference to her religious views and feelings, which he heard in silence. "But nay," she continued,

“I will not trouble you any longer with such thoughts.” She added, after a pause, “If I talk to you of subjects on which we have not often spoken seriously, you must consider that the river of existence naturally is affected towards its close, by the tides of the great ill-discovered ocean into which it is flowing.”

This instantly changed his humour, and he exclaimed, in real alarm, “Good heavens! Victoria, what do you mean? Does your health suggest to you any distrust of your life?”

“Surely,” she replied, “we see enough around us to weaken the firmest confidence in our own longevity. There are abundance of maladies that walk the earth unseen, and empty their vials of poison, often so welcome. To these war

and massacre are now added ; and who can reckon on to-morrow ?”

Her answer, although evasive, in some degree re-assured him. “All this,” he said, “is true ; and has been nearly as much the case in all times as now. But I have an inexplicable ever-present feeling, that I am not about to die ; neither can I bring clearly to my own mind the possibility of losing any of those I love.”

Victoria turned on him for an instant an inquiring glance, and thought how strange it was that he should not remember the deaths of Agatha and Louise. The momentary personal fear for Madame de Valence had passed from his mind ; and he pursued the conversation with his usual display of barbaric fancy and unregulated sensibility.

“When I am happy, death,” he said,

“seems so horrible, that I sympathize with the feeling of the ancients, who carved their marble coffins, and engraved their funeral vases with the fairest shapes of life. They extended the empire of human beauty and affection even into the vaults of the grave. Imagination, animating the forms of this upper and sunny world, displaced those inscrutable shadows. And perhaps it was thus signified, that if the graces and delights of our present bounded mode of being are taken away, nothing more remains than the handful of ashes which fills a painted urn.”

“I,” she answered, “should rather be inclined to say, that in a merely human sense, the thought of death has a solemn, nay, a tender charm, which it lends to all around us. The consciousness that our

connexion with the beauty of the world is so transitory, and that it, like us, must pass away, gives it an increased value, adds to it a delicate shading, and seems even to find in it the varied symbols of higher truths than belong to its own nature. Decay is the doom, but it is also the sign and evidence of life. The world itself is but a mass of relics, in which the remains of other ages support and nourish all that actually is. Time, whose aspect has been made desolate by a myriad of death-like winters, is the nurse in whose arms reposes, like a blooming infant, each succeeding spring."

The wind uttered at this moment a wild scream, and Arthur said, "In spite of such sounds as these, I know that May is coming, and perhaps the present darkness of the year is necessary to its

return. But I am not the more reconciled to the pain which I endure from this gloomy and malignant season. I feel as if nature were in arms against me ; and bringing before me, as it does, the inevitable thought of death, it draws from my own mind a horror which reinforces the impression produced by the state of all external things."

"I shudder," she replied, "when it occurs to me that a life destined in its essence to be transitory, could possibly receive an unnatural prolongation. I think of God and of the soul as necessarily immortal. But show me any material object of which you could affirm that its narrow and earthy existence will last for ever, and I should start from it as from an impious monster. It would at once suggest to me the insufferable

dread, that all which now chains and pierces, oppresses and disgusts me, may also endure eternally, and leave me without hope of release or tranquillity. I love to look on flowers, whose opening buds are but the heralds of their own fragrant funerals; on streams which glide away so swiftly and incessantly to some unseen ocean; on vapours that rise, gather, float for an hour in brightness, and then are scattered beyond the horizon. Gazing on the stars themselves, I remember that they too shall perish. We, we, my friend, can never die: but if the thought of eternity is awful and overpowering, remember that it is not what I have heard spoken of in the terrific dreams of some sophists—an eternity without a God.”

Arthur sighed, but made no answer;

and Victoria continued : “ But I will return to what I was saying of the necessary connexion between life and death. Conceive an illuminated hall, adorned with pictures and statues, and in which many guests should be seated at tables crowned with costly plate, mingled with gay piles of flowers. Let the food of the revellers be drugged with gentle narcotics, such as inspire lovely dreams, and you will see an illustration of my meaning. If but an hour or two pass, the fragrant, the earth-born garlands are dim and drooping, while the fictitious exotics placed among them stand upright, and display their glare of colours, like stiff and gaudy idols. The real personages of the scene, the breathing bosoms, are all in motionless repose upon their couches, the limbs loosened, the eyes

closed. But the painted forms along the walls, those which are in truth but thin shadows, seem the living lords of the palace, and appear to move, to glance, and to possess themselves,—the delusive and inalterable semblances of nymphs and lovers, sages, heroes, and deities. The cold hard figures of marble and of bronze, offspring of the chisel and the furnace, hold up their hands, and smile or frown, like the strong, the beautiful sons of the angels, and overlook the relaxed bodies of men, in whose waking hands they would be but so many fragments of stone and metal. The skilled musicians are bent over their idle instruments, and the voice and touch of harmony are heard from them no more; but the unconscious wind-harp still gives out such tones as might

sound from grass-grown sepulchres ; and still the female dancer on the sculptured vase blows her double pipe, her comrade beats with bacchanal finger the uplifted timbrel, still the bearded lyrist grasps the chords. Silence and cessation for ever befall the living ; it is only the apparent, the artificial which cannot change, because their whole being is outward, and devoid of organs, sense, and soul."

"When you speak thus," said Arthur, "you throw me back into a time and a state of feeling very different from the present. I remember when I used to fancy that all existence is but a preparation for death—all the attributes of life, its pomp ; and that nature displays her marvels, and brings forth her immense succession of beauties, only to swell the obsequies and dignify the cemetery of

mankind. I have sometimes liked to fashion for myself an empire of the future, in which the spirits of the wise and heroic should sit on separate thrones, or move without wings and without effort from star to star; while, in other regions, all malignant, all polluted souls, should drag heavily through long, dim, rocky colonnades, and hear, from beneath the iron pavement, the hollow groans of some earlier and unknown race of beings. I have dreamed of orbs, in which the mythological giants and demi-gods, the prophets of Titanian lineage, the oracular founders of primeval empires, should exist only as vast phantoms, in still and awful repose, like the shadows of crags, of trees, and massy ruins, cast along the green-sward by the evening sun; of gardens for the young and

the gentle, where they race with light pinions, and outshine the fire-fly, tilt with fairy weapons, and mingle in festivals inspired by ærial music; and of a paradise of arts and genius, where each wave of the hand by a musing architect should create the streets and temples of a city of splendour; where interminable libraries, filled with the spectres of every book that Omar burnt, and of all that Noah failed to rescue, should stretch their silent vistas; where theatres should build themselves of cloud at the wish of the poet, thronged with myriads of spectators, and genii should rise through the trap-doors of the stage, and exhibit, untaught by him, his largest and most fervid conceptions. In my imagined Hades, the philosopher was always to be happy, for he might call up at will

a circle of indefatigable listeners; and the poet was never to complain of an unworthy age, for he should have been able infinitely to multiply the applauses of his audience. With all this you look dissatisfied, and you well may be so. To myself, the mode of our future existence has become a subject of painful perplexity. It is a blank more terrible than any definite shape of evil ever conjured up by man."

Victoria answered gravely, and in a low tone, "I, too, have thought of our necessary passage to the invisible as of a theme for the exercise of the fancy, and more often as of a cause for chilly doubt and apprehension. Both are wretched states of mind, but the former is the blinder and the more pitiable. My dear, dear friend, how deeply con-

centrated, how entirely awe-stricken, ought our souls to be, when we connect the idea of conscious self with that of an existence never to end. I feel as if it were almost impiety to speak of that change which will bring before us again, and with the full assurance of responsibility, every thought that we have ever cherished, from the first moment of infancy until the last of earthly life; which will decide the question of an eternal union with God, or of total abandonment to our own evil nature, under whose lighter inflictions we now are almost ground to dust."

The manner of Victoria evidently indicated that she had said more than she intended, and in a spirit which she thought unsuitable to the occasion. Nor was Arthur desirous to continue the

conversation. They separated, never to meet again.

In the evening of the same day, he heard that Madame de Valence was ill, too ill to see even him. The next morning he received the same announcement, and a message from herself, that she was not suffering much pain, and that she hoped to be soon able to admit his visits. For another day or two the report of her health was nearly as before ; and he now became seriously alarmed, and passed the greater part of his time in the antechamber of her apartments. The dead silence within seemed to him more frightful than would have been the noisiest confusion ; and, for the most part, the only sound that reached him was the ticking of a gilt clock, which stood on a table near him, and was ornamented

with a figure of Hope, but which he thought might be numbering the last moments of Victoria's life.

A week had passed since their last interview ; and the day was drawing to its close, when Teresa brought to him a sealed packet, which she said her mistress desired that he would read.

He took it with him to the room in which he had spent the first evening of his residence at St. Ange—the room infested by the eyes of Marguerite de Ponthieu. The furniture, the books, and tapestry, the tranquil and ancient aspect of the place, remained the same. The pictures were still hanging unmoved upon the walls ; and he felt as if the glances of that repelling countenance still reached him through the dark-green curtain that covered the canvass.

When he first sat before the old-fashioned fire-place, discovered the ghost-like portrait, and drew together its wild and ominous legend from the imperfect hints and forgotten documents supplied by Father Jerome, the autumn was fast gathering its shadows over the year. He then believed himself for ever divided, by his own choice, from Victoria, and thought of the continuance of her love as of a happiness altogether unattainable, and which, though accompanied by vague perils and sharp self-condemnation, was the highest that he could conceive. Four months had now elapsed, and winter was reluctantly disclosing the first timid prophecy of spring. But in the mind of Arthur there was no promise, no cheerful looking forward. He threw himself into his former seat before the fire, and tore

open the packet of writing, with the consciousness that his passionate desires had yielded nothing but disappointment, that the flame had produced ashes; and with a terror, in which scarcely enough of hope was mingled to be called anxiety.

The cover included many sheets, in the hand of Madame de Valence, written apparently at different times, and in various states of spirits and of health.

CHAPTER XXVII.

“ FEELINGS and circumstances, which I need not describe, induce me to lay before you more of my history than I have ever communicated to any one else.

“ My earliest recollection is that of an interview with my father, a stern man, then on the borders of old age, whom I had never before seen. He kissed me coldly and formally, and sent me away. But as the door closed behind me, I believed that I heard a groan,

and then a sob, which taught me that his sensibility was more acute than he desired should appear. His emotion was not unaccountable, for he had just lost my mother, a young and beautiful Italian.

“ I must then have been about four years old, and was living with my nurse, on my father’s estates in the southern mountains of Andalusia, not far from the town of Ronda. Sorrow for my mother’s death brought him from Madrid to his distant castle. There he continued to live for many years in a voluntary exile, which his rank and favour at the court made altogether inexplicable in the eyes of the vulgar. He had scarcely any companion but myself; and, fondly as he loved his only child, he seemed far more anxious to gratify my wishes, than to enjoy my society. Sometimes he

scarcely saw me for many days; and often he sent for me only that he might load me with costly presents, obtained from Rome or Paris; inquire in what way he could procure me any pleasure; and dismiss me from his lonely apartments, in which, with the magnificence of a palace, there were the silence and gloom of a monastery.

“ My childhood was, therefore, spent for the most part according to my own liking. Sometimes, indeed, my father asked me what I was learning, and expressed, in two or three words, his wish that I would attend to some particular study. The affectionate, yet solemn, feeling with which I regarded him, gave to these intimations an authority, which would not, perhaps, have belonged to the commands of governants

and preceptors; and I always employed a considerable time in obtaining any knowledge, or practising any art, which I hoped might please him. A faint, but cordial smile, a few syllables of approbation, were the utmost notice he ever bestowed on my endeavours. But it now appears to me as if, from the moment when, after our first meeting, I heard his struggling sigh, I knew far better than any of his attendants, or few acquaintances, how slight were the signs by which he indicated feelings, as deep as ever swelled a human bosom.

“ One or two priests, and the musicians, and some of the nuns, of a neighbouring religious establishment, together with a few wandering artists and scholars, taught me, under the eyes of my female attendants, and in broken

courses of desultory application, much that I have long forgotten, and much, also, from which I have always derived pleasure. I was allowed to reward them as liberally as I pleased ; and the fame of my munificence attracted other instructors, some of whom were better qualified for their task than my former guides. On the whole, however, but a small portion of my childhood was taken up with books and masters.

“ To me, the beautiful country in which I lived, and the manners of its inhabitants, afforded the dearest and most constant enjoyments. I spent great part of almost every day in wandering among the valleys, sometimes on foot, and sometimes mounted on one of the small, but graceful, spirited, and sure-footed horses, common in the Serrania. The servants, whom

my father had placed about me, were eager to comply with all my wishes, and accompanied me, with indefatigable zeal, through the passes of the hills, where huge crags throw their changeable images over a sward, enriched by the bloom and odour of rosemary, lavender, and thyme ; through forests of the evergreen oak and the chesnut ; and among the upland slopes, where happy villages are surrounded by small, terraced gardens, filled with myrtles and roses, with the pear, the walnut, and the apple-tree, or covered with the profuse foliage of the vine, which gives a lively and vernal splendour to the sides of the most rugged mountains.

“I have often sat, in a sunny evening, beneath the shade of a walnut or a chesnut-tree, near one of these Andalusian hamlets, with my favourite horse

grazing beside me, while a group of mountaineers, with their wives and daughters, and one or two of my own followers, stood around, and offered me delicious milk, and honey from the hives, of which the bees were murmuring about me. I have still most clearly before me, the gay and graceful dresses in which both the men and women of those hills delight, and which lend such vivid beauty to their dances on the softly shaded turf. Their natural gestures, noble forms, and dark and brilliant eyes, gave a charm to all their movements and expressions, which filled me with a constant pleasure, and accorded well with the bright streamlet dashing past my feet, and a nobler landscape than any I have since seen, stretching before me, marked in front by thick foliage, and the cheerful abodes of

the peasants. Thus placed, I listened for hours to their animated voices, while the men repeated stirring tales of martial feats and perilous escapes achieved in their smuggling expeditions, and the women sang to me their love-songs and favourite ballads. Their music, though formed by the repetition of but a few notes, is singularly sweet and touching, and the old lament, *Rio verde, rio verde, O quan' tinto vas en sangre*, which relates to one of the military exploits of their ancestors, still sounds in my ears as I have heard it sung by them.

“ Sometimes, but more rarely, I visited the town of Ronda, where I was ever impressed anew by the picturesque situation of the buildings, on the opposite edges of a deep chasm, and united by a lofty bridge. The gay confluence of a

greater number of persons than I was accustomed to see, amused me; and I was, above all, attracted by the sight of the ancient Arab castle, which brought before me, in full reality, the romantic ages and events that I had always been eager to hear and read of. In the great square, bull-fights frequently took place; and in it the *maestranza*, a sort of royal guard of cavalry, composed entirely of gentlemen, were accustomed to perform their exercises. These displays surprised and excited me; and from them I derived the most vivid pictures of chivalrous splendour and courage, with which in childhood my mind was familiar.

“I was happiest, however, when I was pursuing my own fancies among the mountains. Wherever I passed, the children of the peasants came around me,

and I often gratified them with little gifts, and sometimes sent for them to the castle. On some occasions, I even took part in the sports of the young men and maidens of my father's estate, and distributed among them flowers and ribands, for some high church-festival, or danced with the son of one of the tenants in their evening merry-makings.

“My remembrance of these amusements is saddened by the history of a person, towards whom my conduct was perfectly guiltless, but who suffered severely from my slight and interrupted acquaintance with him. Pepe, the Spanish familiar name for Joseph, was a tall athletic lad, the eldest child of a respectable farmer, who lived at about a league from my residence. He was once or twice my partner in those rural

dances ; and I thought myself fortunate in the accident that threw us together, for he danced with more grace and spirit than any of his young companions. After this I met him several times during my rambles over the hills, when I had no expectation of seeing him. He stood up from the rocks, or started out of the overhanging woods, and ventured, but with some apparent hesitation, to join the servants who followed me. If any circumstance occurred which brought them to my side, he showed extraordinary zeal to perform for me the most trivial service ; and if I addressed to him but a word, his countenance was lighted up with joy.

“ When he had repeated several times his unasked attendance, I made some slight remark to those about me, who.

were eager to point out the presumptuousness of his conduct, and from that moment always expressed to him by their manners, that he would do well not to obtrude himself on me again. He never afterwards offended in the same way. But I frequently fancied that I perceived him watching me from a distance; and I scarcely ever wandered in the country without finding, at some turn of my path, fresh flowers strown before me. I thought that I could always trace to him both this and other attentions, such as probably would have been imagined by no peasant in the world but a native of Spain.

“On one occasion, and but one, I again met him, during my residence in Andalusia., I was riding among rocks and brush-wood, and the sudden unruliness

of my horse placed me in considerable danger. My servants were not near enough to assist me, but Pepe leaped from the summit of a crag, seized the bridle, and reduced the animal to obedience. I eagerly thanked him for the service he had rendered me; but as soon as he saw me in safe hands he turned away, and silently proceeded, with long strides, up the steep and broken acclivity. I do not know that I ever again saw him before I left his native province.

“To this unrestrained life, involving me, as it frequently did, in such dangers as those from which Pepe then freed me, I attribute much of my disposition. The striking and singular images, the magnificence of nature, and the cordial kindness and affection that surrounded me, exerted an influence on my mind which has, in a

great degree, shaped my after life. In truth, scarcely any present circumstances have ever appeared to me so lively as my recollections of the Serrania. I still think of the burst of verdure and of joy throughout those valleys after the rains, as of the loveliest, the most inspiring aspect of the world. The lordly figures of those peasants, with their free movements and glowing eyes, are still the personages that visit me unbidden ; their tunes return to me in my slumbers ; and the memory of my sad, retired father, still hangs over my mind, like the shade of a venerable tree, or a cathedral roof.

“ He died when I was fourteen ; and I was removed, in the midst of my sorrow, to the society, at once cold and frivolous, of the nearest convent. From thence, when a few months had passed away, I was

transferred to Madrid, where I lived in the house of a female relative of high rank, and under the especial protection of the royal family. There I spent my life in public, and became, by right, a member of a select and stately circle. My first emotion was one of wonder and admiration. To it succeeded weariness and regret; and, in spite of balls, titles, diamonds, and compliments, these feelings lasted for some weeks,—I believe I might have said some months.

“However, I gradually learned to take an interest in the occurrences and persons that fell under my observation. I became acquainted with several of the most eminent men in Spain; and I felt myself to be immediately under the shade of a government, which, though weak at the foundation, still towered aloft over the

most splendid of christian empires. I amused myself by laughing at the pranks of the royal pages, was thoroughly instructed in the exercise of the fan, and surprised the court by my performance, at a masquerade, of the part of an Andalusian peasant-girl.

“ I remember, with painful minuteness, the occasion on which I supported that character. I looked around me at the several personages of the most various ages and tempers, who wore the beautiful dress of the men of Ronda. Their manners and attitudes at once betrayed them to be but pretenders; and I told the lady whom I accompanied, that I saw no one fit to be the partner of a young Serrana. Soon, however, I observed in the crowd a tall young man, attired in the garb which belongs to the

natives of the southern mountains, and with an accuracy of costume such as I had remarked in none other of the guests. He advanced timidly towards me, and begged that I would be his partner. I of course agreed, and was astonished at finding him as familiar as myself with the graceful and spirited dance which I had selected. The mask concealed his face, and he scarcely spoke to me at all; but I was puzzled by the glimmerings of a strange remembrance; and although it seemed impossible that he could be Pepe, I fancied it almost certain that he was no one else.

“ I determined to watch him. In the course of the evening I danced with several persons, and among these with the Marquis de Valence, then French ambassador, whom I had already began

to like much better than any of my other male acquaintances. Still I observed the eyes of the Andalusian turned towards me alone. At last I perceived that his manner excited some attention. Questions were whispered as to who he was, and how he had gained admittance. But seeming suddenly to recover from his fit of abstraction, he wrapped himself in a large cloak, and without having removed his mask, glided through the crowd, and quitted the apartments. I felt as if he had left his shadow behind him, and that it perpetually clung to me, and filled those bright saloons with darkness and mystery.

“ Soon afterwards I married the Marquis de Valence. My education, although in many ways extremely imperfect, had enabled me to estimate the value of in-

tellectual acquirements in others. I was, therefore, fully prepared to appreciate the information and accomplishments possessed by Monsieur de Valence, which were so much more extensive and complete than those of contemporary Spanish noblemen, as to constitute an overpowering addition to the charms of an expressive countenance, and polished and gentle manners. In my feelings and conduct with regard to him, there is nothing which I need conceal, nothing for which I should reproach myself. But I now find it inexpressibly painful to speak of him ; and I would fain, if it be possible, refer to him no more. It is enough to say, that I was for five years a wife, and that I was mother of a child, whom I have lost, but whom, I trust, before many days, to rejoin.

“ When I had lived for some months at Paris, a celebrated and benevolent physician of my acquaintance called on me, and said that he came on a singular errand, for that his visit had been suggested by the delirious ravings of a dying patient in an hospital, who often repeated my name, though not with any intelligible meaning. In answer to my inquiry, whether the sick man was a native of France, I was told that he commonly spoke in Castilian, and that Spain was supposed to be his country. I immediately ordered my carriage, and set out for the hospital, having arranged with my guide that I should be enabled to see the sufferer without at first appearing in his sight. These precautions were, however, fruitless; for we had scarcely entered the building, when one of the

Sœurs de la Charité informed us that the Spaniard had expired but a few minutes before. I begged to see the corpse, and in the wasted and convulsed face I was shocked to distinguish the features of poor Pepe.

“ This discovery at once distressed and bewildered me ; but when I had in some degree recovered, I asked of my friend, the physician, to make all the inquiries in his power as to the history of my unhappy countryman. I had not long to wait, for a Spanish priest, resident at Paris, called on me the following day, and stated that Pepe had desired him to see me as soon as possible after that death which then inevitably awaited the young Andalusian. He had charged his confessor to tell me a story, of which I will here repeat a few particulars.

“He had conceived, from the period of our first meeting, a violent passion for me; and, with true Spanish impetuosity, he cherished it to the utmost, even under the certainty that it was all but hopeless. When, after my father’s death, I went to Madrid, his life became intolerable to him, and he made his way to the capital. By a mixture of boldness and cunning, he gained admittance to the splendid masquerade, in which he became for a time my partner.

“Soon afterwards he heard of my marriage, and though broken in spirits and in health, he followed me to Paris. Here he spent his time in lingering about my house, and in watching my departure and return, in the hope of sometimes gaining a glimpse of me, but without entertaining for an instant the thought of

making himself known to his former acquaintance. Under these circumstances he soon sank into the most wretched poverty; and if he had been disposed to work, the sorrow and malady which devoured him would have rendered him incapable of exertion. He who had been the boldest and gayest of mountaineers, and an object of admiration and envy to all below the nobility of his province, was now clad in rags and pinched with hunger, an exile beaten to the earth by disease and misery, and without a single friend among a people of whose language he knew but a few words.

“He often spent whole nights stretched on the stones within sight of my gateway; and while he saw me surrounded by servants and splendidly attired, leaving my house to enter into luxurious

society, he thought of the days when dancing by my side in his own valley he had fancied himself almost my equal, and had dared to nourish a love which had long been too strong for his happiness, and would soon overmaster his existence. It was this love, and the pride which subsisted on it, that prevented him from applying to me, though he knew that I would have instantly relieved his wants. His desertion of his home had been so unaccountable and so cruel, that he never thought of either returning thither, or asking his relations for the assistance which they would have been overjoyed to furnish. Above all, he did not wish to live, and thought of death as of the only possible termination to his sufferings. He was found in the street near my residence, perfectly insen-

sible, and with all the marks of the most miserable penury. No delay occurred in removing him to the hospital; but it was too late. He lingered only a week, and nothing then remained on earth of the young, the beautiful, the impassioned Pepe, but a haggard and squalid corpse.

“ I have related this melancholy story, because its hero was the first human being to whom I am aware that I was the cause of serious evil. I have also another reason. I know that you may have heard my character as a woman lightly spoken of: even now, little as I am *now* entitled to complain, I feel for an instant as if I would readily blot out with blood — my own or any other’s — the damning accusation. But I know this; and knowing also that I am innocent before God, even of momentary

levity in my manner towards that unhappy youth, I swear to you that I can better conceive myself as his devoted paramour in some hut of the wilderness, than as bound by the slightest tie of affection or of passion to any one except *you*, whom I may have been suspected of loving.

“Of my Parisian life, you have probably heard enough to give you an intelligible image. You know that I enjoyed a larger share of luxury, of admiration, and of power, than has often fallen to the lot of a woman. And I will therefore say no more of the circumstances I have been placed in than may be necessary to let you understand my history.

“The first year of my widowhood was spent, for the greater part, in the silence

and retired antiquity of St. Ange. Nor until considerably after that period did I re-enter the sphere I had before belonged to. I occupied myself during my residence in the country with books, with the management of my property, and with the society of the few persons whom I invited to visit me. My mind had been considerably sobered by the change in my situation; and these employments, which were free from all taint of ambition and display, helped both to tranquillize and strengthen it.

“ But they did not incline me to think with satisfaction of the fluctuating vanities in which I had been plunged during a few previous years. I was sometimes, indeed, pursued by importunate remembrances of splendour and superiority, with which I could not always abstain from

contrasting the stagnant surface, on which my life then appeared as if becalmed. But, on the whole, I was far from regretting the unquiet eminence I had for a time abandoned ; and I endeavoured to keep my reflections in a channel as far as possible from that traced by my personal experience.

“ I busied myself chiefly with images supplied by the history of past centuries, for I was discontented with all that I knew of the actual world : and I dwelt exclusively on the characters of some illustrious men, who passed before my fancy in majestic procession, and on a few momentous periods illumined by their genius ; for I found nothing in the ordinary annals of nations, or in the condition and the aims of the masses of mankind, which could raise them, in

my eyes, above the level of my own generation.

“ It was through this method of contemplation that I was first brought to a deep and intelligent enthusiasm for the arts. The works of the great artists appeared to me to exhibit, in pure and permanent forms, all that I had with labour and difficulty selected for my own delight from the heap of human records, built up, as for the most part it is, of crimes, baseness, and misery. In those beautiful products of imagination, I found no preponderating alloy to be painfully extracted and thrown aside; in feeding upon them, I had no disgust at concomitant horrors to struggle with. In the achievements of the noblest painters, in such of the more wisely celebrated poems as I had access to, and in ancient

sculptures, which seemed to me no less perfect and enduring, and far more lovely and significant, than the fairest crystals of nature's handiwork, I fancied that I discovered examples and symbols of the loftiest thoughts that can ever spring from the soul of man, unaccompanied by any traces of the innumerable failures, and the pitiable feebleness, of all other attempts to give them a visible reality.

“An analogy to all I knew of the history of the world, presented itself to me, in the conception of a vast bason of dusky and barren mountains, filled with mist and noisome vapour, never pierced by any ray of light; but the pinnacles of the rocks shoot up into bright air, and exhibit in marble, bronze, or gold, in adamantine ice, or steadfast fire, the perfect and undecaying shapes of heroes,

teachers, and benignant gods. From that circle of awful beings dawn the sunbeams ; and when they sink behind it, give place to an unclouded moon, and stars that seem to acknowledge a tie of kindred to the forms on which they shine.

“ I cannot say that this mode of thought rendered me happy ; for it placed all that I delighted in and revered, at an immeasurable distance from whatever I could hope to be. But it gave me feelings more quiet and more cheerful than I could have attained by brooding over my own mind, or by occupying myself with the state of actual society. I learnt, in consequence, to look around me with more satisfaction ; and was so far reconciled to the times I lived in, that I determined again to take up my abode

in Paris, at least during some months. I was the more inclined to this, inasmuch as I knew, that, by residing in that capital, I should be able to examine at leisure many productions of illustrious artists, and surround myself with such as might peculiarly gratify and instruct me.

“ I bade adieu to the undisturbed country which I had for some months believed that I should never more desert ; and I established myself in the house which has acquired a new and mournful interest in my affections, as the spot where we first met. In the beginning, a numerous company seemed very strange to me, and I was annoyed by the attentions which my re-appearance in the world excited. But I employed myself, for the most part, in forming the collection of sculptures

which you have seen ; and in the tastes, sensibilities, and habits of inquiry, which I thus indulged, I found my chief consolation for the irksomeness of my intercourse with the fashionable crowd. At the same time, I was gradually led into a renewal of my acquaintance with a large proportion of the thousand idlers whom I had been accustomed to meet before my secession from Paris ; I also became familiar with several eminent men of letters, of whom I had previously known nothing ; and I had not as yet given up all connexion with the court. Among the very different classes of persons with whom I was more or less in contact, I found that my new pursuits, and the change in my manner of thinking, altering as they did the whole aspect and complexion of my life, had given rise to

a degree of curiosity and wonder, which one would think could hardly have sprung from the conduct of a woman of two-and-twenty, unless she had designedly laboured to produce it.

“I was sufficiently aware of the notions prevalent among those around me, to feel sure that they never would understand me, or sympathize with me. But I enjoyed a scornful and bitter kind of pleasure, in preparing to bring before myself, as clearly as possible, the difference between the human world, which my own daily existence was a part of, and the world created by the imagination, in which my thoughts delighted to pitch their unseen tabernacles. I therefore devoted myself laboriously to the completion of my gallery, and to the decoration of my house; endeavouring to present

the furniture, pictures, and statues, not in the most glittering array, but in the most just and harmonious order.

“The expense and time which I bestowed on these arrangements gave them such notoriety, that hundreds of my acquaintances, and even many persons whom I had never heard of, applied for permission to visit my house, as if it had been some royal museum, or enchanted palace. This was not what I wished; but at the end of a few months, my design was accidentally forced on to its completion; for the queen informed me that she would like to visit my gallery. I immediately fixed on an evening, for which I invited five or six hundred of my dear friends, including both the most fashionable and the most celebrated persons in Paris.

“ My acquaintances, the royal and noble, the beautiful and the learned, all were punctual to the time ; and for several hours my ears were stunned by the most discordant sounds, of eulogy, of inquiry, and astonishment. While I looked at the splendid and tumultuous throng, as they wandered in groups, or mingled in sparkling eddies, over my mosaic floors, and around candelabra, vases, and pedestals, the contempt which I then felt for the mass of existing men, received abundant gratification from the sight of those mean, peevish, and affected countenances, the awkward gestures and unmeaning costume, the involuntary exhibition of all petty and inappropriate passions, in a large society of unquestionably the best company to be found in Europe. The most beautiful forms,

animated with the purest and most sublime expression ever conceived by man, looked, in that motley assemblage, as ghastly and unnatural as if they, and not the spectators, had been the deformed and vile caricatures of humanity.

“I can say sincerely, that I cared scarcely at all what opinions might prevail of my taste and knowledge. I expected little of good sense or just feeling from my guests, but I looked for more than I found. Hardly a single remark was made by any one, even of those who wished to compliment me, which did not display insensibility, carelessness, trifling, and ignorance of the grossest kind. By far the best accredited whisper of the evening, and that which drew the widest sympathy, proceeded from an old duchess, who stated that

I was certainly one of the silliest women in the world; for she had learnt, from the first authority, that I might have hung the whole interior of my hotel with cloth of gold, for less money than the cost of my paintings and statues, friezes, columns, and fresco walls.

“ I was soon tired and ashamed of the feelings which had led me to draw enjoyment from the follies and worthlessness of my contemporaries. But I was startled into genial delight, by the exclamation of a young Italian painter, who had come recommended to me from Rome, and who was standing in the vestibule of my apartments when I passed behind him, and heard him murmur, “ Great heavens! what a vision to be seen beyond the Alps!”

The success, however, of the evening,

in the ordinary sense of that word, was complete and striking. I was more in fashion than ever. And having a secret resource in thoughts and views, very different from those that swarmed around me, I was better able than I expected to endure the weariness produced by the incessant noise and flutter of the busy rookery in which I had placed my solitary nest. At the same time, I felt so thoroughly indifferent as to all the transitory interests which continually agitated and almost maddened the greater number of my acquaintances, that I could draw considerable amusement from merely looking on; while, from the same unconcern, I could act for myself with unrivalled freedom and carelessness. Nevertheless, I frequently recurred to a fancy which had seized me at St. Ange,

and once or twice almost resolved to put it in practice, and to retire, for the remainder of my life, to my paternal property in the Serrania of Ronda, where I might contemplate, with a saddened, but a steadier spirit, the footsteps of my youthful life on those wild hills, which ten eager and various years had not worn from my memory.

“ Had I acted on this design, probably we never should have met, and both you and I might have been spared a world of guilt and misery. It is now certain that I shall never again tread the steeps of the Andalusian mountains.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

“ABOUT this time a performer came on the stage of the great world of Paris, who soon excited almost as much attention as Law, the Comte de St. Germain, or Mesmer. This was Monsieur de Roussillon, a man of good family, but who had not been heard of in France for several years, and who reappeared, none knew from whence, with as much composure and dignity as if he had enjoyed, for all his life, the unquestioned deference and admiration of the best and highest

society. Yet, he presented himself with nothing like vulgar effrontery, and resorted to none of the quack devices of adventurers in order to draw curiosity or subjugate opinion.

“ He appeared little more than thirty, but was probably some years older. It was remembered that in very early life he had served in the army, and it was said with courage. His retirement had been variously attributed to a duel with a superior officer, to an intrigue with the mistress of a minister, to losses at play, to disobedience of orders in attacking the enemy, and to a dozen other causes. There were also many rumours of his having spent the intervening period in wandering through America, or in studying in an Italian monastery ; or, as some wildly asserted, on the supposed authority

of the Russian ambassador, a Frenchman, answering to him in appearance, had gained, about ten years before, the predominance over a small tribe between the Caspian and the Aral. His forces were increased by successive victories, until he had extended his power eastward as far as Samarcand, and, marching south, had pillaged several of the cities on the Persian frontier. He then obtained from the officers of the shah an immense contribution, which he divided among his followers, and himself returned to Europe.

“I mention stories such as these only to illustrate the kind of opinion which prevailed with regard to the hero of them. This, however, is certain, that his time had not been spent in idleness; for he had obtained a very exten-

sive knowledge of books, and a more intimate acquaintance with the characters of nations, and of all masses of men, and with the baser parts of human nature in the abstract, than any one I ever knew.

“Neither have I ever seen so impressive an effort of skill as the appearance of Roussillon in society. As to mere gesture, he always gave me the notion of a man who had been accustomed, for a great part of his life, to wear the loose garments of the ancients or of the orientals, and who had therefore escaped the timidity, constraint, and violence, one or other of which is perceived, by a cultivated eye, to infect the outward demeanour of almost all, even among high-bred gentlemen. His dress was always studiously plain, and his walk

and attitudes seemed the easiest and simplest imaginable. I, indeed, who knew him better and watched him more suspiciously than did any one else, thought that I could discern labour, and the wish to produce a lively effect on the minds of others, in all that he publicly did or said.

“He did not talk much, but his conversation was pointed and striking; and he delighted, by sudden, unforeseen blows, to retort the polished sayings of the witty, and confound the pompous maxims of men of letters. He did this without any show of arrogance, and with all the air of a man of rank, and of finished politeness. He had also the advantages of a well-formed person, of regular features, and of eyes which, though neither deep nor glowing, aided

admirably to enforce his meaning, and fixed, when he pleased, with an acute and commanding expression on those whom he addressed. Roussillon, therefore, could not fail of being celebrated and sought in the choicest circles which Paris then afforded. For then, as always in the capital of France, any airy, transitory meteor was secure of wonder and worship.

“It was thus that a clever and accomplished man became, in the general opinion, a being of mysterious and almost supernatural powers. For scores of young men, and hundreds of pretty women, his words had all the value of inspired oracles. His countenance and conversation were strongly marked with a sarcastic melancholy. The obscurity which overclouded a part of his history

seemed to authorize his acquaintances in attributing his opinions and phrases to some unknown source of more than earthly wisdom; and the powerful theatrical effect which his presence in society undoubtedly produced, even over persons who were prejudiced against him,—as its causes and mechanism could not be detected by mere casual observation,—was referred by the crowd to some completely inscrutable influence.

“The ideas of a superhuman unity and consistency of character, of a strange and perhaps a mournful secret never to be revealed, of calm superiority to all ordinary weaknesses, of unconquerable courage, and splendid intellectual faculties, seemed embodied in this one singular actor; and were made attractive to all by the charms of his person, manners,

and conversation. The minds of the upper classes in Paris were thus filled, by Roussillon, with something very nearly approaching to enthusiastic awe and timid idolatry.

“An actor I have called him, because I know him to have been one; an actor in every moment of his life, which subjected him to observation, and often, I doubt not, from habit and self-deceit, an actor when he himself was his whole audience. He obtained success by presenting to all an image of the secret which lay hidden in their own bosoms, but so adorned and exalted as to intoxicate their vanity, and give them a feeling of importance which they had never experienced before. He scoffed, like them, at the pretence of morality, though with far more than their knowledge, wit, and

boldness; he proclaimed the worthlessness and wretchedness of life as the inevitable portion of all, and thus relieved every one from the accusations of conscience; he sneered at the thought of blaming those who sacrificed every weightier consideration to momentary and vulgar enjoyment, while he seemed himself insensible to temptation. His talents and energy dignified, in the eyes of others, the discontent which he avowed, and added honour to the vices in which he had indulged, although he now professed to have grown weary of them. He thus exhibited, in the rich colouring of genius, and as deified by the strength of will, that weak and pitiable self, from which we had before been accustomed to recoil, even while we wanted courage and faith entirely to repudiate it. Can

you wonder at the sympathy which he excited, or at the immense power with which he influenced all around him ?

“ Of course, the greater part of what I have now written on the subject of Rousillon is the result of after thought and observation. It was by means of long acquaintance with him, and much, much suffering, that I was led into those reflections which explained to me his character. I was at first affected like others, and perhaps as strongly, by the entrance of this haughty apparition into the society I frequented ; and I was no more able than they to analyse my own impressions with regard to him. But I observed him closely ; and amid much that was new and striking in his conduct, I discovered some slight failings, and traits of weakness, totally at variance

with the part which he wished to play. For instance, at brilliant suppers, and while animated and striking conversation was going on around him, I have seen the countenance of this proud, melancholy, and thoughtful being distorted with anger at some fancied defect in the flavour of his food or wine. I have detected him in manœuvring to revenge himself on a paltry coquette, for some inconceivably trifling injury or slight; and have perceived a train of artifices brought silently into operation, in order to secure a fresh display of homage from an ignorant and frivolous crowd.

“It was only at considerable intervals of time that I observed in Roussillon these indications of a stunted soul. Meanwhile he perpetually gained new tributes of admiration from me, as well as from

half Paris. At this period he never interested me so much as by his treatment of the men of letters. Either from liking, fear, or fashion, they were patronised or flattered by most persons of large fortune and high rank, to whom it scarcely ever occurred to enter into competition with them on their own ground. Indeed few men of quality would have been capable of it; and those who had cultivated literature seldom ventured themselves more perilously than in a slight skirmish. It would have been unworthy of a gentleman to engage earnestly in any pursuit, and then to be surpassed in it by low-born rivals. But Roussillon seemed completely to scorn all such considerations, and not to contemplate failure on his part as possible.

“ He never, indeed, laid aside the rare

and refined polish which belongs to few in France but the far-descended, like the beautiful patine with which age has invested so many ancient medals; and by this he was clearly and sharply distinguished both from the crude, rough recluse, and the busy, literary adventurer, smooth-rubbed by the use of the market. But he seemed to feel a severe and inward joy in coping, on questions of speculation and human experience, with those whose trade it was to discuss them. In such conversations he never took part for more than a very few minutes, and frequently, instead of addressing himself to the persons from whose opinion he differed, he turned away, and, speaking to some woman, or man of fashion near him, made a remark of irresistible wit and force. He thus

succeeded in conveying to all his auditors an impression of his amazing ingenuity and intellectual vigour. He always, indeed, manifested a certain practical and personal knowledge of the workings of the mind, and of the influences of varied circumstances, which contrasted ludicrously with the thin and hollow fancies of his victims, the professional sophists.

“Long after I had learned to admire his management of these encounters, though some suspicion and repugnance always mingled with my pleasure, we became so intimate, that he talked to me in private of the authors whose works were celebrated throughout Europe, and many of whom we constantly met in society. I well remember the tone of scorn with which he described their

ignorance of every thing among men except their own narrow forms of life; their ostentatious, juggling attempts to exhibit generous and tender feeling; and the compound of genuine selfishness and vanity, and pretended morality, which they dignified with the names of literature and philosophy, and which unhappily withdrew them from engaging in the more useful and natural occupation of manual labour. 'We live,' he said, 'in a whirlwind of nonsense. What can be so absurd as the mutual jealousies and petulance, the tricks and delusions, the fever of loquacity, the rage for writing, and the frenzy of self-conceit, among our modern reformers! They think themselves far wiser than Pythagoras, without having ever learned the preparation necessary for his school, namely, the art of

silence. For my part, I have quite as much respect for a fool of quality, as for a noisy plebeian quack. The one gives dinners, to earn the fame of patronage; the other buys them, by pouring out lies, plagiarism, flattery, and self-eulogy, in a jargon of mock-metaphysics. As to politics, the dull cinders of nobility are far less annoying than the green, smoking, hissing fire-wood of these new declaimers. To be sure, our friends, the *Ducs et Pairs*, are not very stirring spirits; and they and the rest of us who possess privileges, are not anxious to destroy ourselves. But at least we let Europe go on in tolerable quiet, and without suffering more than the usual miseries of man ever since the creation; while these fellows would bring about universal confusion, in order to give

themselves the importance which they envy us. They talk of the question between stagnation and deluge, as if it were one between frogs and peterels. As for me, I would choose to be a halcyon, creating a calm for myself in the midst of tempest.'

"In expressing his opinions of the talkative society of men of letters, Roussillon seemed to forget, what he probably desired others to remember, that such conversation, though he only took part in it concisely and at intervals, afforded him his most remarkable triumphs.

"His relations towards women received scarcely less attention than his eloquence and his general manner. A great proportion of my attractive contemporaries were loud in their admiration of him. It seemed as if he had only to

select his favourites from among the most beautiful and fashionable women in France. But he appeared wonderfully indifferent to these advantages; and for a considerable time he was not reported to have attached himself to any of his fair idolaters.

“Among these, however, was not to be numbered a friend of mine, Madame de Beaufort, whose youth, beauty, and virtue had not induced her husband, the Comte de Beaufort, to treat her with affection or gentleness. The melancholy which naturally arose from her situation, rendered her very careless as to the more exciting pursuits of those around her. She was not carried away by the strong current of curiosity and applause which Roussillon had set in motion; and this, I suppose it was, which

drew his attention to her. Once or twice it struck me, that he was more interested in her than he was willing should be known ; but this was so improbable, that I thought but little on the subject. Elise had treated with entire coldness and contempt the persevering advances of several other men, the most accustomed to success in such attempts ; nor did there appear the slightest chance that she would be influenced by much longer and more assiduous attentions than any one supposed that Roussillon would pay even to so lovely a woman.

“ She was of a soft and mild, but of a tranquil and steady character, and was rather anxious to shun observation than willing to incur the gaze of men.

“ Almost on a sudden, however, a change became apparent in her, which

neither her own disposition, nor any thing generally known as to the conduct of Roussillon, could account for. She seemed converted by a pagan miracle to faith in that false god. She made no attempt to conceal her new-born feelings. In all societies alike she fixed her eyes on him alone, and caught at every word he uttered. Her face, but lately so still and mournful, lighted up with a blaze of sunshine, when he bestowed on her a syllable or a glance, and even when, unobserved by him, she could place herself in his neighbourhood. No one who saw her could doubt that she would with equal readiness have thrown herself, had he wished it, into his arms before all the world, or have stretched her body beneath his feet.

“His manner towards her was very

different. Others concluded that she did not perceive what seemed so evident, an air of patronizing good-will, of indulgent superiority, which was the warmest return he ever made for so much devotion. Even this lasted but for some days, at the utmost not more than three or four weeks. He then began to give even less attention to her than to many other women. She soon vanished from the public eye, and was said to be dying.

“ These incidents were of course attributed to the singular power of fascination, with which Roussillon was supposed to be invested. It was asserted that he had always been perfectly indifferent to her, and scarcely aware of her existence, until he was compelled to notice her uncontrollable passion for himself. His name was rendered more marvellous

than ever, while in silence and loneliness Elise was drooping to the grave. She lived but a few months. Her husband died about three years after, and I then received a letter which she had addressed to me shortly before her decease, and which he had detained from reaching me. It was found among his papers, and was sent to me by his executors.

“In it his unhappy wife informed me that she wished to leave behind her an explanation of the last events of her life, and of her conduct with regard to Rousillon. He, it seems, had observed her perfect unconcern for him, and had probably been attracted by her appearance. Stimulated, therefore, by a double impulse, he had determined both to conquer her admiration, and seduce her feelings. But it would have ill become

the part he played to solicit openly and humbly the favour of any woman, and more especially when, as in the case of Madame de Beaufort, even he incurred considerable risk of failure. He, therefore, by a train of cautious devices, made himself known to her in private, and plied her with declarations of the most fervent love, while he alleged pretended reasons for abstaining from any public recognition of her. After many months of the most sedulous attention on his part, and of agonizing struggles on her's, he had gained his object. Her manner towards him made his success notorious; and as he had thus gratified his wishes, and obtained the credit of a difficult achievement, without sacrificing his reputation for fastidious indifference and irresistible attractiveness, all he had

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aimed at was secured. Thenceforth he treated Elise as no longer worthy of his notice, and left her to die in solitude. I know not of any heart-breaking expressions of misery comparable to those, in which she bewailed the sacrifice of her virtue, to one who held good faith in man and purity in woman as no more than grains of dust, existing only to be trodden on.

“ You must remember that I did not obtain this knowledge of the conduct of Roussillon until long after the events. At the time I but very slightly suspected any thing like the truth, and on the whole was inclined to agree with the majority of voices, and to suppose that Elise, in her deserted and melancholy condition, had been seized with a sudden enthusiasm for this splendid knight-

errant, but that he had felt no sympathy with her, and had soon become weary of affecting it.

“ A short time after her disappearance from society, he began to honour me with a larger share of his notice than before. Laying other causes out of view, he had probably chosen Madame de Beaufort as his first prey, because I had never concealed my opinion of his talents and manner, and therefore she would afford him the more signal and difficult success. But when she had left the stage, I became the object of a good deal of his conversation, which for point, energy, and concentrated brilliance, certainly sometimes exceeded even that of Mirabeau or Chamfort.

“ I had then youth in my favour, some beauty, a vivacity of manner which I

have now long lost, and a name which, even though a widow, and living in Paris, no one, I believe, had dared to darken. These, together with my rank and fortune, may account for his strenuous efforts to gain my favour. He never spoke much or hastily when before a crowd; but his all-sufficing manner expressed whatever he pleased, and sometimes reminded me of the subdued, refined, and graceful pantomime of the ancients. When he spoke, I listened and was gratified, and for the time I thought that human nature could exhibit nothing more finished than the cultivation which this man had given to all his extraordinary endowments. The more thoroughly to secure my sympathy, he learned to lay aside, even in public, the proud remoteness and unlimited mastery

of his usual demeanour; and he stood before me as an intellectual equal, nay, as an inferior and a suppliant.

“I do not pretend that I derived no pleasure from the confessed attentions of such a man. I was conscious of some exultation over women who had been in the habit of sneering at me behind my back as a prude, and who had laboured with more than the industry of avarice or ambition,—with the unequalled zeal of vanity,—to attract, not the deference, not the solicitation which I received from him—for of these they had no conception—but a glance, a smile, a moment’s conversation. Living, as I did, in a crowd, and more dependent on publicity for my daily enjoyment than I have since been, I could not be insensible to the additional importance which I gained

in the eyes of all about me. But I thought far more of the nearer view which I then obtained of a remarkable man, and of the new vistas which his experience and speculations appeared to pierce for me into the depths of human life. I have since seen but too much reason to be convinced that these openings, apparently so distant, were but skilfully painted on a flat scene, which hid from me the real prospect, as in some ancient theatres, built on hills, and overlooking an expanse of sea and country, the landscape was often concealed by the stage decorations.

“ It was long since I had been happy, or even tolerably satisfied. I had, therefore, been impelled to ask myself the question, why was this? and had hence been led, in the course of observation, and

during many different states of feeling, to various other inquiries, all equally perplexing. What, I had thought a thousand times, is the purpose of our existence? how far can we shape our own lives? what clue can we find through the jarring confusion, and how explain the moral mystery of all around us—all within us? what is evil, and what is good; how are they connected with the end of our being, and what light do they throw on its meaning? Again, how are we profited by the off-hand philosophers, who say that we have only to seek our own happiness, and render all the benefit in our power to others,—forgetting that happiness is the dim and fleeting phantom, in whose being, though we believe, we so seldom and obscurely discern its presence,—forgetting that, before we can

attempt to assist others, we must have decided what is that goal of humanity which we are to help them in reaching, while we are still ourselves ignorant of its place, and uncertain if indeed it be any thing but a delusion? Why point out to us a blessing which we have not strength to grasp? why warn us of a danger which we are too blind to shun?

“ In practice, these speculations but little affected me. I endeavoured, so far as I could, to do what seemed to me right and generous, and to avoid whatever is corrupt and base. Thought aided me no farther, than to clothe with the shapes of fancy and tradition the variable doubts and repinings that constantly assailed me. But the world in which I dwelt, and which was peopled with those changeful shadows, seemed to me

surrounded by an atmosphere, and a meteoric firmament of its own, presenting on all sides, in the distance, a faint, mysterious line, the shore, as I dreamed, of some other region, to which, though inaccessible, I felt that I was attracted; and from that shore appeared to rise the starry lights that marked and traversed the immeasurable depths above me. I lived outwardly in the courts of princes, and amid the whirling glitter and transient mockeries of idle society; but I often retreated among my own irregular impulses and affections, and among the wild Titanian troop, born of my own mind. Thence I looked forth wistfully to those other distant objects of contemplation, of which no report had reached the human world that I daily frequented.

“ I was, however, growing weary of anxious and unappeasable doubts. I had begun sometimes to think that indifference to all troublesome speculations, and the resolution to aim at nothing but the indulgence of elegant tastes and kindly impulses, is the only wise temper; and that, insufficient as it is to render us happy, it makes existence more endurable than any other scheme of mind. This view had, indeed, done scarcely any thing towards giving me content; and I was hopeless of receiving the slightest help from the men of talents of my acquaintance. They all appeared to me persons either dull in feeling, mere machines for the collocation of logical propositions; or resolved to extinguish in themselves the misgivings and aspirations that disturbed me, and to be satisfied

with the pleasures of intellect, of vanity, and sensuality; or—and these were but a few—desperately involved in the very difficulties from which I could not extricate myself.

“Roussillon came forward with different claims, and at once compelled my attention. He appeared to be no dealer in shallow volubility, no noisy mountebank, playing with doctrines and principles as a juggler with his dice and balls. He had actually seen and known the workings of human nature on a large scale, and in a myriad of examples. He seemed not to think for the purpose of talking, but to speak because he had thought and felt long and painfully. He looked and acted like a man inaccessible to the motives that governed all around him, too strong for the tyranny exercised over

us by the customs of others, and almost raised above the miserable necessities of human nature.

“ I fancied that in him I might find a true prophet ; and while I listened to his conversation, even before he had begun to address it to me, I was carried by admiration away from all that could afford me steady footing. In the enjoyment of intellectual pleasure, I forgot the deeper wants and wishes of my mind. Such was his power, that I often disbelieved the existence of the very failings I had detected in him ; and rather gave credence to the ideal character with which he had impressed me, than to the proofs of petulance and artifice which my eyes had seen.

“ When he began to converse more particularly with me, I felt as clearly as

ever, that all his powers did not enable him to inspire either liking or confidence. The calm mastery which he appeared to possess over all the problems that agitate our minds, and all the solutions of them that have been attempted, often indeed overcame for the moment my secret scruples. But when he was no longer beside me, when I was no longer subjected by his manner and his countenance, the consciousness always returned to me, that, though he employed the same expressions as myself, he did not use them to convey my meaning; that I was occupied and disturbed by many mental conflicts, of which, in truth, he had known but little, and which he could consider only as the products of sickly and childish reveries. Even when under the power of his presence, I could scarcely

persuade myself that I should attain happiness by adopting views, which not only involved so little of any high principle, but which allowed such scanty room for the play of sympathy and affection.

“ I remember that I once spoke to him of those early recollections which I have before mentioned to you. I said that I sometimes fancied myself, though another outwardly, yet the same at heart as in infancy, and still wandering through the flowers and foliage from which I had plucked my childish garlands ; that the sunny dreams which had visited my cradle, and had departed for a time into an unknown paradise, sometimes returned, and hung with rose-leaf wings above my pillow. His countenance assumed an expression of pain and of

sarcasm; and he replied, that our first years are cut off from our after life by a deep chasm, through which an impassable torrent has forced its way. ‘The foam,’ he said, ‘of the cataract intercepts our view of the region on the other side. It is delusion to mistake the glittering spray, and coloured sun-bows, for appearances belonging to the land beyond. Of its aspect we have but an indistinct and variable remembrance; and be assured, that even in our dreams we cannot re-enter its precincts, or at all communicate with the beings who inhabit it.’

“Meantime, I became more accustomed to what had displeased me in him; while his talents and knowledge lost nothing of their charm, and his devotion to me was daily more apparent and more humble. I gained from him much information;

and I discovered many new shades and differences in his character, such as we discern in a landscape when the morning twilight opens into day. My pleasure in his society was thus gradually increased; and I felt all the excitement in becoming intimate with him, which is derived from the pursuit of any interesting study, and which had in this case the added and more dangerous power of his flattering and obsequious sympathy. He obtained great influence over my mind, but I never for an instant loved him. You know whether I can feel love; you know whether I am likely to practise deceit; whether I have now an interest in deceiving any one; and I tell you that I never loved Roussillon. I heard from others, I saw by his whole manner, that he wished to gain my affections; and I

asked myself whether he had done so, whether he was likely to do so? The answer rose readily from my heart, that, in spite of our frequent intercourse, of much admiration, of much unsatisfied curiosity, and of a sense of enjoyment when I listened to him, amounting almost to delight, I never felt confidence in him. It never seemed to me that, in moments of deep sorrow, or of bounding joy, I could go to him as to the natural partner of my emotions; that when my soul was swelling with the tide of vague, ill-understood imagination, with calm, sacred enthusiasm, with religious wonder and awe, I could ask him to share my consciousness, and to interpret and justify it in my own eyes. I should have been afraid of exciting his bitter, though suppressed contempt, or of inclining him

to sullen indifference. Above all I was profoundly assured that in any moral crisis of my life, where I might wish for guidance and support, it was not from him that I could hope for better aid than the high-wrought maxims of worldly prudence, derived from a large experience, through a theory of gigantic selfishness.

“ You will probably be disposed to inquire how I can ever have thought of asking myself the question which I so easily answered. But remember, that, cold as were those views of Roussillon, which seemed to embrace the world in a sky of solid, glittering ice, he stood himself before me broadly distinguished from his opinions, and I could at will command from him delicate courtesy, deep homage, or passionate extravagance.

Of the romantic spirit with which he wooed, I will describe one out of many instances.

“ We had happened to converse on the subject of the horn of Ammon and of Alexander, and of that assigned to Moses by Michael Angelo. We had then spoken of the horns of various animals from which they might have been copied, and I expressed some curiosity to see the head of the chamois. I heard nothing of Roussillon, until, after a few days, he suddenly entered my rooms, which were then full of company. He was dressed as for society; but he told me that he had returned half an hour before from Switzerland, and that his servants were in the house with a chamois, which he had himself shot. He had ridden the whole journey; and, from the time of

his absence, it was clear that he could not have rested for more than three or four hours between his departure and return. This story made so much noise, that one of the ministers inquired into its accuracy, and found it established by the testimony of the post-masters.

“ I could not, without extreme and unnecessary pain, dwell on the months of my life during which Roussillon openly professed himself my lover. He used every resource of humility, of skilful attention and flattery, and at last even of overbearing fury, in order to secure my subjugation. I found, also, that he had employed his talents and influence adroitly to spread the notion, that I was, in fact, his mistress, hoping that I should become indifferent to virtue, by losing the good fame which ought to be its

inseparable shadow. At length he urged me, with redoubled fervour, to listen to his suit; and said, that for me he had sacrificed the consistency of that splendid character which he had formerly upheld before the world, and that I owed him the poor reparation of returning his attachment. I replied, that I had little gratitude to bestow on a man, who had merely abandoned, for his own purposes, the performance of a certain theatrical part on the stage of society; that I could not love where I could not give my confidence; that I knew the detestable falsehoods which he had circulated with regard to me; and that I must desire him not only to desist from an attempt which was quite hopeless, but also to reckon no longer on the kind of intimacy and apparent friendship which I had hitherto allowed him.

“ His violence on hearing this was perfectly appalling, and he threatened me with the speedy vengeance of one whose hatred had never, he said, been baffled. ‘In punishing you,’ he exclaimed, ‘I could only hesitate, because it is scarce worth while to crush such an insect as a woman. But vanity and folly so amazing as yours require a signal chastisement, lest others might also be tempted to defy me.’

“ This was probably but the wild threat of mortified and angry malignity. At all events he was left but little time to put it in execution ; for within a day or two after he was publicly insulted by the brother of Madame de Beaufort, who had just returned from India. They immediately fought a duel, in which Roussillon was mortally wounded. The shock of

his death was severe enough to me ; and unhappily I found that his power long survived him. The reports which he had so basely spread were never forgotten, and were even strengthened by the absurd sympathy of the fashionable Parisian crowd, who all lamented that consummate deceiver, and clamoured that he had shown but too much indulgence to the frenzy of the unhappy Elise."

CHAPTER XXIX.

“THE character of Roussillon was, in more respects than one, of great importance in my history. His influence on my reputation I have already referred to; but, although I have to undergo the exquisite agony of retracing the parts of my life which are likely to have the chief interest in your eyes, I cannot command myself so far as to detail the whole process and all the results of the policy of that shining demon, as they affected either the temper of my mind or the

circumstances I was placed in. Were I to make the statement you could scarcely comprehend it, unless you knew, as I do, how many there were that worshipped a fallen star, as if Lucifer had still been lord of all the lights of heaven.

“ I could not take refuge from my own dissatisfied thoughts in general society ; for brilliant as was the exterior of French intercourse, I had long felt that its attractions resembled those of the serpent, which fascinates in order to destroy. I do not require that, in numerous companies, or in hours of ordinary relaxation, men should devote themselves to the pursuit of truth, or parade and analyze the deeper movements of the heart. But I could not hear without a pang, all principles of reason, all powerful feelings, all pure affections, treated with the veno-

mous ridicule which was the boast of my contemporaries. I am, indeed, persuaded that in France there is more quickness and shrewdness in enjoying refined and complex wit than has ever elsewhere been known. But you cannot conceive how tedious, how acutely painful to me was this fashionable tone of remark, which, although often adorned by the talents and skill of those who indulged in it, overflowed with the worst bitterness of contempt. You were unaccustomed to it, and had not time to grow weary; young, and disposed to overlook much for the sake of the intellectual exercise; still full of hope, and therefore able to oppose by native strength the attacks of scurril jesters on your faith and happiness. I saw you admiring the glitter of the weapons, and the rapidity

and lightness with which they were brandished, while I felt that every thrust of the fencers was piercing me to the heart. When I read the many evidences of the dejection and wretchedness of Madame de Maintenon, in effect more than Queen of France, when I saw the miserable and hopeless old age of Madame du Deffand, I knew that I had earned the right to understand them, by that experience which had wrung from me so much of my life-blood.

“To me even the attractions of polished manner at last became a source of more pain than pleasure. From habit I should feel the want of it in those around me. But in those who have it to the utmost, I seem to observe that it is purchased at a terrific cost. For it all candour and naturalness of mind are

thrown away; and however rare and highly finished the compound that supplies their place, to a weary and discontented mind, in search at once of truth and of repose, it has no virtue sufficient to compensate for life, freshness, and sincerity. I hardly know whether I myself may not be dreaming or inventing; but to me it appears that every movement, look, and word which reaches me is nothing better than a lie. Those who are not wilfully deluding others, are playing for their own applause. It is by the observance of veracity in the ordinary details of life that we can best measure the degree of general morality. It is a gauge that will not, indeed, sound the depths; but while it floats on the surface, it shows infallibly the direction and force of the current. To many of

the philosophers of my acquaintance, who talked perpetually of the love of truth, in opposition, to vulgar prejudices, truth-telling was unknown.

“ I remember that I was inclined to rub my eyes, to read the page again, in order to overcome my own distrust, and to exult as if I had lighted on some prodigious and inestimable discovery, when I found in a book of travels the account of an uncultivated tribe who had no notion of the meaning of a jest or a sneer. In such assemblages as that in which we first met, and in others far more lively and splendid, no less than in the small, choice circles of thoughtful and learned men, I have said to myself, how far less exciting, but how far less corrupt than all these envied seductions, would be the short-sighted unpretending dulness of the

poorest labourer, conversant only with outward objects, and with a few plain, venerated maxims.

“ These reflections, aided by the discoveries that showed me the true nature of Roussillon, kept me as far as ever from the hope of finding in any real persons a living manifestation of my ideal model. I had, sometimes, in idle and self-complacent moods, dreamed that if I could equal in cheerful calmness and mild superiority the transcendant inhabitants of my imaginary commonwealth, I might, in outward form, be worthy to associate with the lower and more earthly ranks of that visionary hierarchy. I had been told I was beautiful so often, that I was not, perhaps, very criminal in believing it. At all events, if this were vanity, it has been fearfully punished.

But while I saw the world around me so benighted in wretchedness, while I longed for a state of things so different from any that exists, and thirsted after a kind of sympathy, of which no fountain seemed to flow in any living breast, I was discontented, agitated, and feeble, and found as faint a reflection in myself as in any one else of the pure and serene heaven to which I looked up with earnest adoration. How often has my heart sunk within me, overladen with a burthen of thoughts, laid on it by shame and remorse, its task-masters. How often have I been tempted to curse the objects of my idolatry—the good, the truth, the beauty, whose light served only to show the rough crags and abysmal pitfalls lying on all sides round me!

“To a person in this frame of mind

the voice of the political teacher and reformer, who proclaimed the misery I was conscious of, and was weary of beholding, sanctioned the instinctive craving for happiness which devoured me, and pointed out in what way it might be gratified, sounded like the utterance of a heavenly message by an archangel's tongue. The first movements of the revolution drew my attention to the theories of the popular leaders, and to the deep views and strong feelings which, like the stem and roots of a tree hidden by its ample foliage, lay concealed beneath those doctrines. My experience assured me that the world to which I belonged was incapable of yielding aught but wretchedness ; and I could not obtain any point of reality from which to suspend the ideal sphere of my affections.

In the political metaphysics of my new teachers, I found an acknowledgment of imperfections and evils in man's social existence, as melancholy and frightful as those from which I myself was suffering. But I was also cheered by the vision of a happier era, to appear not in any distant Atlantis, nor among the cloudy splendours of the philosophic horizon; to be produced by no unknown agency, and partaking not at all of the baffling uncertainty which clings to the dreams of the morose recluse; but of which the promise was as certain as the simplest and most familiar elements of human nature. The priests and doctors of the democratic reformation taught me that for the miseries which we all see around us, all feel within us, the remedy was as universal as the air, and that the removal of them was,

therefore, as sure as the existence of truth itself.

“ The history of the earth, the volume of my own life, were now open before me, and easy to be understood. The fluctuations and yearnings of my busy and unsuccessful thoughts, the tumults of so many years, and the defeat of so many hopes, were at last accounted for and justified. I was freed from a load of self-reproach and of despair. I felt again the light cheerfulness of childhood, accompanied with the bold reliance and steady contemplation of the future, which belong only to maturer age. A new and more elastic force moved in all my veins, and I breathed a more inspiring air. The first results of the revolution, which were so unquestionably useful and beneficent, seemed to give the strongest sanction to

the feelings which I shared with so many exulting hearts, throughout Europe, and which, I believe, arose from the strangeness and rapidity of the events, as much as from the principles that caused, and the tendency that guided them. Enough soon happened to chill my enthusiasm; and the mere lapse of time, which enabled me to think more accurately, led me to doubt the closeness of the connexion between the first blessings of that great political change, and the abstract propositions on which its merits were rested by its most prominent champions.

“These misgivings, however, did not affect my outward conduct, for I saw no reason to question the necessity of a revolution, in order to overthrow the monstrous system of self-willed oppression under which France had been for ages

suffering. Neither was there much in the views of the emigrants, or of the knot of infatuated and fraudulent intriguers about the king, which could induce me to wish for their success. I never have wavered in my opinion that the former government was an atrocious outrage against humanity, and that the members of the privileged orders were, for the most part, blind, base, profligate, and selfish, beyond all hope of their improvement. But I was soon forced to perceive that, although the reformers were superior to their antagonists in talents and activity, their objects were, in general, no less hateful or despicable; and that the theories which they inculcated, though urged with somewhat more of confidence, and illustrated with greater vivacity, might be made to sanction acts

as shameful as the worst of those which stained the previous rulers. There was much, however, in the moral principles to which they professed their devotion, considered apart from their personal motives and conduct, which still justified, in my belief, the sympathy they had won, and held me a reluctant companion in the ranks of a party whose leaders I now regarded with extreme disgust.

“ My observation of the characters of the politicians with whom I was familiar, and my knowledge of the effects of their views on their happiness and on my own, daily weakened my first faith. But, having taught myself to consider the welfare of mankind as at issue between these men and their opponents, I dreaded and repelled the doubts which assailed me, as if they had been deadly enemies

to my duties and my benevolence; and I endeavoured to expiate the guilt of having admitted them at all into my mind by new labours and new sacrifices in the cause of the revolution. I was embarked on a wide sea, and had vowed to perform a distant voyage, and I hoisted sail on sail, and urged the rowers to their incessant task, while a voice warned me within that the vessel was running to destruction.

“ You may, perhaps, conceive with what anguish I beheld the signs of danger multiply and darken over France. The growth of fraud and violence was so rapid as to fill me with helpless dismay. The band of men, in whom I had trusted as in the deliverers and preservers of their race, stood displayed around me as raging beasts of prey, or loathsome

reptiles. I did, indeed, what I could to prevent the outrages of my own party, and mitigate the sufferings of their adversaries ; but when factions are playing for the stakes of wealth, power, existence, and the popularity on which all these depend,—when the individual members are in danger of exile or death, the influence of the persons to whom they owe the most, is all but unavailing. If one crime, moreover, is, from any accident, forborne by those whose worst actions are the result of calculation, another must be found to supply its place. I sometimes changed the victim, but never could affect the purpose of the assassin, or prevent the commission of the murder.

“ Impatience now became the most characteristic tendency of my disposition. Why should I for ever subject myself to

imbibe misery from contact with those whom I have no means to serve? I see nothing but difficulty and grief arise from the intercourse of men with each other. Nor does the contemplation of the world supply me with the slightest pleasure, except what I derive from a few subtle structures of thought, a few impressive images, and some high and serene recollections, which appear to me suspended like clouds and stars in air, and far removed, beyond the possibility of connexion with the living multitude of mankind. In flying to these visionary retreats, I sometimes gained an hour of tranquillity. I have dreamed away those moments which to all around me were full of agitation and alarm, by transporting myself, in fancy, to the ruins of some forgotten city, where I have

taken my station among the immense remains of theatres and temples, on a mountain declivity above the sea. I have conceived the dwellings of the living fallen on all sides into mossy heaps of desolation, though streets of carved sepulchres were standing inviolate and undecayed; and the funeral urns still held their handfuls of dust, while serpents coiled themselves in empty baths, and the green acanthus wove its natural garlands round the humbled Corinthian capital. Here, I have thought, let me fix my habitation, where every thing reminds me how little and how brief are all the concerns of man. Here let me murmur my lamentations, here chaunt my vain remembrances to the winds, and to the ocean sounding far below, till I, too, am subdued into a still,

unconscious fragment, unregarded and solitary as the grey memorials that encircle me.

“ I was alternately agitated by the anxieties, and depressed by the disappointments, from which such fancies occasionally relieved me, when I became acquainted with you. All I had before known of mankind disposed me to doubt whether happiness were likely to arise either from the calm conventional relations of life, from the pomp of hereditary and recognized station, or from the fierce and ominous triumphs of political rivalry. When I had been assailed by the professions of courtly gallantry, I had questioned, not whether mutual and devoted love would be a blessing to human beings, but whether the homage that I received was any thing more than the expression of

inflated vanity, or a wild and blind passion, with which I could as little sympathize. I had seen, and above all I had felt, nothing which could warn me against the seductions of the genuine and ardent, but vicious affection of a superior mind; and I had yet to learn that the most delicious and absorbing of our feelings may spring from the most corrupt source, and produce the sharpest and most lasting misery.

“ At the period of your arrival in Paris the revolution was working itself into worse convulsions than any of the preceding. The principle of democracy then displayed to all the world that it never could ally itself with any other legal and co-ordinate authority. It then was ascertained by experiment, that the philosophic sages of the new era

considered the will of a mob of sanguinary ruffians a sufficient authority for violating their own most solemn oaths, and trampling on the constitution which alone gave them any public corporate existence.

“I had long foreseen the crisis to which we were approaching. My hopes had vanished into air. Horror had succeeded to enthusiasm; and I was left without a friend in whom to confide—without a source of satisfaction on earth. In you I found, at least, sincerity and earnest feeling; and, in spite of your many faults and deficiencies, these were more to me than the showy theories, the perverted talents and accomplishments of all my contemporaries. When I began to attach myself to you, that consciousness, so strange, so tremulous, so long unknown, and never known

before, with the same semblance of a new and divine life in the soul, was itself alone sufficient for me. I had been much accustomed to look before and after, and to render myself an account of all that was doubtful or difficult in my own position. An unceasing combination of flattery, servility, persecution, jealousy, and temptation, directed against me—a woman, and alone—by that circle of society in which I lived, had compelled me to walk warily, and scarcely ever to act without premeditation. Yet habituated as I was to arrange the mechanism of my future days, to prepare beforehand my scanty stores of enjoyment, sedulously to guard against accidental hostility, and even, so far as I could, to avoid provoking evil tongues; disciplined by woeful expe-

rience, to watch and wait upon each variable indication of fortune's cloudy day, I now did not look forward at all. I studied as little what might be the result of my unresisted emotions as the brown and parched up plant, stricken by continued drought, when the soft morning shower first rekindles its verdant life, foresees the autumn that will hereafter wither it away, or the winter that will load its relics with a snow sepulchre.

“ When you were with me I desired nothing more ; when you had left me, the probability of soon seeing you again was the only subject that occupied my thoughts. The buoyant gladness of my earliest years, the fervid enjoyment of the world's natural beauty, the pride of courtly rank, the excitement of intellectual victory, the idolatrous enthusiasm

for the arts, the flashing sun-burst of political confidence and hope,—all the feelings that had in turn possessed me with delight, and become a source of perplexity and regret, were now restored with added force and glory, all instinct with an ethereal life, all concentrated in my love for you. You were more, far more to me than the glades of the green earth, the thrones of social eminence, the oracles of revolutionary prophecy, the spiritual forms, lucent through the tranquil marble, and in the Elysian atmosphere of painting; and yet the impressions made on me by all these seemed again to have a distinct existence when you were by my side, and to be enriched with innumerable meanings, else unperceived and dead. But, above all, those potent ideas of the Invisible, so

imperfectly indicated in such words as Life, Truth, Being, which had haunted me as with the awful presence of super-angelic visitors, now appeared endowed with a single personal existence, answering to my own, and for ever revealed before me in you.

“Such was the present mastery of the enchantment to which you had subjected me, that I scarcely thought at all of whither it was leading my steps; and when any such consideration presented itself, I turned away in terror, as if from one who was about to rob me of the winged, free, ecstatic mode of being I had so lately gained. I repelled indignantly the lightest suggestion of degrading myself by the indulgence of a transitory and criminal passion. Of marriage to be contracted with you I could form no

distinct or intelligible conception; and I only know that once or twice, when I sat with you among those exquisite and stately forms of Grecian loveliness, and, gazing on your face, seemed to find in it more of impassioned and intellectual beauty than in the fairest of the marble genii round me, the consciousness flitted over my mind, sudden as a blush over the face, that to hold you in my arms, and press you without restraint to my heart, would be delight too deep to be sustained, and of such overwhelming fulness that I needs must die.

“Conceive, then, if you can, how I was affected, when on that day, in the beginning of September, our lips first uttered the avowal of mutual love, first united in a long, long kiss. It was not content or hope, but sublime transport,

which animated me. I was unconscious of any existence in or for myself, and was overpowered with happiness at seeming, in my own eyes, a jewel on your garment, a blossom in the garland that crowned you. All my senses appeared to me expanded and awakened into inlets for those torrents of unknown beatitude, which burst, and blazed, and rolled on me in thundering music. Yet, when you had left me, I was outwardly calm and silent, and sat gazing on the unsubstantial air, as if you had been still before me. I was mute, and subdued by amazement, or some profounder feeling. And when I had returned gradually to imperfect self-possession, I smiled, and stretched my hands, and moved, and looked around. I recognised the room and the furniture, and whispered, Here he stood—at that

door he entered—this was the seat on which he placed me—and here he called me his own—he called me his own Victoria. It is as sure as the existence of these outward objects, that I am at length beloved.

“ O, that tremendous day! Is it possible that the extremes of rapture and of horror can have been thus united? That rending tortures and desolateness of heart should have succeeded, between noon and evening, to sensations, which a winged cherub, in his flight that encircles the universe, and with his brightness that outshines the sun, might regard with envy and humility? That hideous and sickening massacre, since the day of its perpetration, has scarcely left my memory for an hour. The corpses have seemed to strew my path; the carnage

to infect my drink and food ; the images of the murdered, and the more horrid shapes of the murderers, have, side by side, moved ever before me ; occupied every seat, entered every door, and been reflected in every mirror of my apartment ; while piercing whispers have proceeded incessantly from all those ghastly lips, and repeated, ‘ You were an accomplice in the deed.’ Yet, terrific as has been my punishment for the part I took in the earlier acts of the revolution, and infernal as the pictures that have constantly surrounded me, these recollections have received a darker colouring, and been armed with a more deadly sting, from the interview in which you abandoned me.

“ I had, during that day, been living a charmed life, indifferent to every thing

beneath the moon but my remembrance of you, and the certainty that you loved me. I was forced out of my trance, by the shock of hearing from a friend the crimes designed to be committed in the prisons of Paris. All that I had done to promote the revolution, in order for ever to prevent the oppressions of kings and nobles, instantly occurred to me; and I reflected, that, under pretence of promoting that good cause, an act was about to be accomplished, of such extensive operation, and guilt so damning as at once to exceed whatever evils had been wrought in Europe, during a century, by all its monarchs and aristocracies. I shuddered at the thought of having been for some weeks almost locked up in the charm of your society, and comparatively inattentive to the action of the great

popular machine which I had so laboured to set in movement. I asked myself, whether I might not earlier have done something to interrupt the march of ruffian policy? Whether even then it would be too late to awaken from inactivity, and prove myself worthy of your love, by energetic mediation? Meanwhile, what I wanted above all, was accurate intelligence; and the moment I saw you, who were now avowedly so precious to me, I determined that I was better entitled to endanger you than any other of my acquaintances; that you had the strongest of all claims to be permitted to aid me in my enterprise of mercy, and that I would therefore ask you to visit the prisons.

“ I was astonished and confounded, on your return, by the views and feelings

which then agitated you. Surely, I thought, no life but mine was ever made up of so unbroken a series of melancholy contradictions. Because I desired to remedy a small portion of the mischiefs which I had helped to produce, the first ray of affection from any one worthy of me, which had shone on my heart for many years, was now to be withdrawn by him to whom I had devoted all of myself that I could command—him whom I loved as tenderly and unalterably as one human soul can cherish another. An arctic winter was to be succeeded by a day shorter than that of the tropics. I could sympathize with you in all your abhorrence of the ties that bound us to society; could long, like you, to be no more seen of men, who had crowned our dearest hopes with the blighted buds of

disappointment, and to secure, in some distant solitude, the undisturbed enjoyment of each other. But a love that should join together two human spirits, in bonds drawn from their own substance, and indestructible as it, appeared to me too weighty and sublime to be shaken by casual circumstances, and subjected to the accidents of place and time, which you were resolved to hold as the arbiters of our destiny. When, in spite of all my tears and supplications, and the agony of remorse with which you saw me torn, you refused to remain a week in Paris, and made our union dependent on my willingness instantly to fly with you into some obscure retirement, the question flashed through my mind, Is it possible that I exist at all; that I am conscious of any thing without me or within; that

life is aught beyond the dream of some vast, mysterious, slumbering power, and we the empty forms that visit it ; or, if there be truth in a single thought that I have ever experienced, am I indeed, after so many hopes and fears, efforts of unavailing enterprise, and successive periods of passive anxiety, again to be made utterly miserable by the hand which I had trusted would lift me to the stars ? Am I to be again consumed, by secret fire breaking from the earth, on the spot which I had selected for my household altar, and for the tower of my strength ? Can it be, I inquired in my heart, that he is, after all, no other than one of the deceiving shapes that always hitherto surrounded, eluded, and mocked me ?

“ Thus confused, and so nearly desperate, I forgot every consideration but the

fear of having once more given my hopes away to the winds. I made I knew not what wild promises, that if you would grant me but a few days to repair the evil of a whole life, and finally to break off all my relations with mankind, I would hesitate at no obstacle of shame or guilt, but follow you wheresoever you might guide me, and be content with any degradation which you might choose to inflict. Even this humiliation, this final self-sacrifice, by a woman not accustomed to stoop, one to whom policy had never taught the lesson which now, for the first time, she learnt from love, availed me nothing. Through the tumult and suffering of my swoon, I heard you pronounce the word 'Farewell;' and it seemed the most cruel of all insults to a being, from whom you drained away

even the last, least drop that could enliven her dregs of existence.

“ When I recovered my senses, I still was weak and bewildered ; but I soon collected myself sufficiently to feel that I was now more completely alone and naked than ever, with the demands of a more severe responsibility to bear, and a dejection of mind which rendered hope and action alike impossible. Of the thoughts which pursued me through the dark and mazy hours of the next few weeks I remember nothing distinctly. All my attempts failed, except that which rescued you from death ; and I could not even succeed, by my utmost efforts, in obtaining permission to remain at Paris, instead of being exiled to St. Ange. The feelings with which I looked forward to meeting you were far too complicated

and too painful to be detailed here. The consciousness of the shame which I had undergone for you, was mingled with the mournful good-will which leads the dying man to embrace his executioner, and with all the tenderness and passion, repressed but unsubdued, which have made us what we are to each other, and have followed me even to my death-bed.

“ I retained, however, on leaving Paris, the hope that I might never again give way in your presence to the weak self-abandonment which had burthened me with my own contempt, and perhaps with your's. I had often been inclined to wonder and to quake at the recollection of having thrown before your feet all dignity and purity of character. In opposition alike to sophists, coquettes,

and men of gallantry, I had always before revered these qualities as the most appropriate glory of woman, as a necessary condition of every other charm. I even shed some tears of indignant pride, while I reflected how unavailing to my own happiness, how little authorised by any trust-worthiness of yours, had been the offer to cast away my still blooming and verdant honour, and, for your sake, to abase myself in dust and infamy. In my plan, therefore, of proceeding, when we should again meet, although I had no design to conceal that regard of which you must soon have discovered the permanence and the force, I resolved to convey to you by my manner that I well remembered the terms on which we had parted, and that I now held myself released from all subjection to you.

“ I came hither, and the first sight of you convinced me that the affection which had already produced in me such fluctuations of painful and delicious excitement, was far from spent. When I beheld your looks, and listened to your voice, I thought of myself as immeasurably hardened, for being able even to recollect the more capricious and ungenerous parts of your conduct. I would willingly have fallen into your arms, and implored you to forgive me.

“ Sometimes, in the course of the first days which we passed together, an hour of less bodily feebleness than usual, and a few gentle and encouraging words from you, shot through me the hope that I might yet live and be happy, for I might become your wife. But it was not long before I discerned your invin-

cible repugnance to think of any one but a countrywoman of your own, perhaps some individual English lady, in that relation. I fancied, also, that you could not reconcile yourself to me, except as a friend or a mistress, from the three or four years by which my age exceeded your's, and from the habits of independence, pride, and, if you please, self-will, fostered by the situation I had held in European society. These reflections and surmises pierced me with many a cruel pang. Yet how, I at length said to myself, am I entitled to nourish any fancies such as these? Is it not much, that in the midst of so many instances of heartless and ferocious selfishness, he still loves me? Much that he should entertain a sentiment of regard for one, who can hardly think

without abhorrence of herself or of her kind ?

“ My mind was divided between two feelings, each of them more powerful than any which ever before had singly tyrannized over me. The one was love of you ; the other, a longing for a different kind of life from that I had before known, in which I should yield no more to the vanities and passions that had so fearfully misled me. My affection tempted me to throw myself, with greater impetuosity than ever, into one of those fierce currents which experience and remorse warned me to avoid. My conscience, and the gnawing recollection of so many disappointments, urged me to resistance, and cheered me with the faint hope, that the one course on which I had never entered, that of

steady self-renunciation, might at length give me such tranquillity as I had not obtained by yielding to a haughty temper and cherishing refined sensibilities. But enfeebled and broken as I was, I could not decide resolutely on any line of conduct; I felt inclined to close my eyes upon the future, to drug my memory into lethargy, to give up my will to the next comer. I would have shed unceasing tears with any one whom I had seen to be suffering, and have lain down in a grateful euthanasia at the feet of him who would bestow on me a syllable or a look of kindness.

“How ill then was I fitted to resist the constant aspect of your craving discontent, which never expressed itself in words, but forced me incessantly to feel, that only by the sacrifice of all I valued

in myself could I secure to you even momentary enjoyment. Continued anxiety and decaying health had left no sources of movement in my mind but love of you, the yearning for repose, and those sharp stings of conscience which hourly punished me for my past errors, and denounced the latest and the worst of them to be as surely productive of misery as all the preceding.

“But the touch of your fiery, trembling hand, and the sight of your angry restlessness, were enough to overpower all considerations except the one of attempting, for a time, to appease and soothe you. I sinned with my eyes half open to the aggravation of wretchedness which my compliance would bring on both of us. But I trusted that, for a time, I should see you contented. I

knew that I had not long to live, and that my death would be hastened by the agitation and shame of my fall. I hoped that, when we were no more together, you would think of me with tenderness and regret, rather than any more painful feeling; and would seek, in a different frame of mind from that which then possessed you, and among characters better regulated, less perilous, and less perturbed than those you had lately encountered, a happiness founded on your duties and on calm and legitimate affections. I would to God that you could feel as I do, how desperately criminal I was in pursuing any eventual good, even for another, through a vista of guilt and infamy.

“On the few succeeding days of our life I cannot dwell. They were filled

for me with repugnance, loathing, self-detestation ; and I derived no calculable share of any happier emotion from perceiving how different were your feelings. For many months I had never loved you so little as when I had finally abandoned to you that purity, the vast and utmost sacrifice that can be made by any woman. Even the certainty of gratifying you, vain and trivial for my happiness as I found it to be, when weighed against my sensations of disgust and anguish, even this was soon withdrawn from me. You became as capricious and dissatisfied as before. Your whole appearance and manner proclaimed that I had added to your wretchedness, by conduct which had ratified my own complete and irreparable destruction. Men may feel sorrow, remorse, and shame, but I doubt whether

any of your sex can have experienced, like me, the abhorrence of the light of day, the inclination audibly to curse my own existence, the burning wish that the heavens would crush, the earth devour me.

“ The consciousness of pollution never to be cleansed, which has accompanied me until this moment, received no alleviation except from the prospect of that death which every hour now brought visibly nearer to me. In the dreary silence of my apartment, where every familiar object reminded me of my misguided and delusive life, and of my last tremendous degradation, I could scarcely, for many days and nights, collect sufficient tranquillity to think with any purpose, to feel any thing but the convulsive sickness of a breaking heart. The first

circumstance which gave my mind another direction was this : I saw, from a window, a poor peasant-woman labouring through the storm to early mass. O God ! I thought, is there still a hope of forgiveness for so lost a wretch as I ? Shall this humble being, whose unknown and toilsome days have probably been so far more honourable than mine, expose herself, for the performance of her religious duties, to all the fury of the freezing gale, while I, whose offences are so overwhelming, whose life has been one tract of lordly and triumphant guilt, ending in the vilest shame, consume the few hours still left me in unavailing grief, and in defiance of the humiliation to which I have wilfully subjected myself ?

“ The long train of rapid reflections which followed these, was far from recon-

ciling me with myself; but, now in my dying moments, I venture to trust that it brought me nearer to God. From Him I have obtained, not, indeed, happiness or confidence, but a deep, awe-stricken faith, which alone has enabled me to bear up till now against feebleness, pain, and the keen sense of disgrace, and, in what pauses I could steal from penitential devotion and from bodily suffering, to trace the pages which are the only useful legacy I can leave you. They will soon be all remaining on earth of Victoria, except the recollections, often empty and mistaken, but not always, I trust, unkind, of those who have known her.

“To you I have explained myself more fully than to any human being. I am aware that, if the thoughts of our

minds, which have been struggling in a long contradiction, could possibly be described to others, many would believe that they were nothing but large, mis-shapen shadows, materials for some dreary romance. In this light they are of no genuine interest. It is vain to attract an idle curiosity; vain to value even the workings of our hearts merely as ours. But as living and deeply rooted realities, arising from the centre of that life which the spirit of all truth and good has deigned to influence, they are more important to us than all the possessions, the appearances, nay, the passions and the deeds of outward existence,—than the blood in the cells of our bosoms, the earth we tread on, or all the knowledge and enjoyments of man.

“And now, dear friend, farewell. I

take my leave of you, because I am departing from all things earthly. Duty and christian piety,—ideas so solemn that I should shudder to name them if I were writing in order to call forth your unavailing and transitory sensibilities,—these awful powers would have commanded me under any circumstances but those of a consecrated union, to place between us the barriers of distance, of different employments, and associations. But I have learnt—a lesson for which I am cordially grateful to you—to distrust myself; and I know not whether I could ever have had strength to leave you, until your own inevitable disappointment and dissatisfaction should have led you to cast me violently away. God has relieved me from the suffering either of flight or abandonment. The gentle air

of death will soon dissolve into their former unnoticed elements the bosom that you could so readily inspire or oppress, the eyes that so often have conversed with yours. The same lenient influence will, in a few hours, if many prayers and repentant tears be not altogether fruitless, enable me to think of you without anguish, or a sense of choking shame; though never, if my humble supplications are heard, never without sympathy. If you could doubt before, these confessions at least will inform you, how deeply and fervently you have been beloved. My heart seems to assure me that its love, however purified and transmuted, will exist for ever.

“Of you, Arthur, I do not ask, that you will regard my memory with ten-

derness. The greater part of men who have been brought heart to heart with any others of their race, remember the accents of the wizard or the prophetess, but soon forget the purport of the oracle. In this, as in all else, it is the semblance, the sensation, the falsehood which leaves the sting; the meaning and the end slip into darkness and vanish. I spend my dying breath to implore, that if you forget the teacher, you will recall the lesson I have been the means of conveying. It may be summed in a few words, though it answers all the inquiries of all philosophers, and solves the riddle of existence, while it equally condemns the vain self-confidence which trusts in the natural goodness of man, and the guilty despair of those who abandon the causeway of duty because they cannot

follow it unaided : It amounts but to this, that we seek in vain to construct for ourselves a binding and supporting law out of our own tastes, impulses, and notions, while we turn from that which exists without us, based eternally in the Being of God, and reflected in every human heart. We are inefficient to fulfil its obligations ; but shall find, if only we will seek, assistance from One in whom, with no mixture of our weakness, there is inexhaustible charity for all our failings."

CHAPTER XXX.

LETTER TO HENRY WILMOT FROM ARTHUR CONINGSBY.

“ So long a time has passed away since we have had any communication, that you will scarcely recognize a handwriting with which you once were familiar. It is, I think, eight years since I saw you at Hamnor, when I was flying in danger and obscurity from England ; and until now I do not suppose that even a report has reached you of any part of my history, beyond the few lines which I wrote on my first arrival in Paris, to inform you of my safety.

When we parted, I was in a state of mind ill fitted to give you an intelligible, much less a favourable impression of my opinions and wishes. Enough has happened since to disturb me still more violently.

“ I told you, I think, of the affection I entertained for my cousin, Miss Barrington; which, although not strong enough to induce me to abandon my political objects, yet filled a considerable place in my thoughts, and affected all my views of the future. Yet, in the midst of the storms, the dangers, and anxieties of the next few months, a woman, of whom, even now, I can scarce think without a spasm, triumphed by her exquisite accomplishments, and her nobility of spirit, over all my previous feelings. To me she devoted her

whole being ; for me she sacrificed her purity and her pride ; and when, after reading the heart-breaking confession which she had traced in the last days of her existence, I hurried to her death-bed to implore that, even then, I might offer the miserable reparation of making her my wife ; I found a taper sinking in the socket ; an attendant, whose head was covered with a cloak ; and, laid on the couch of my mistress, a corpse, clad in the robes of death.

“ I have since suffered much from others and from myself, but I have never experienced any thing approaching to the shock of this bereavement. I was appalled and stunned at beholding the enormity of a crime which I knew to be now irreparable. After some weeks of helpless prostration, I set out to wander

alone through France, and soon left a country where every object reminded me of opinions which I could not think of without shame; and of a woman, whose image afflicted me with unceasing pangs.

“ In other countries,—and I visited most of the continent,—the appearances of the outward world for ever recalled her eloquent and fervid love of nature. And the works of those refined arts, which she better comprehended and more delighted in than any one I ever knew, seemed in my eyes all intended for some triumph, turned by a malignant catastrophe into a funereal procession; and where, instead of the crowned conqueror, with his statues and trophies around him, I saw, upon a visionary bier, the pale shadow of her I had loved and

murdered; while all the airy, majestic shapes that genius has evoked, and on which she used to gaze with so much eagerness, came following at a mournful pace, and fixed on me their wan, unearthly looks.

“ I could find neither pleasure nor tranquillity any where; and after being for months distracted between repugnance and longing, I travelled to the mountains of Ronda, where her youth was passed. She had given me a vivid and fond description of her childhood, which, aided by my own imperishable regrets, conjured up for me, in all the path-ways of those valleys, the phantom girl, such as she must have been before that Spirit of the Dawn had ever been darkened by communication with the crowded world, or had drawn contagion

from my fatal presence. I found there the woman who had been her nurse, and who, in blindness and at the age of eighty, retained the clearest remembrance of the child. The knowledge of her death gave the final blow to the worn-out existence of the aged servant; and the first feeling of consolation that had risen in my mind was derived from my attendance at her death-bed and funeral,—the only duty I could perform to the memory of Victoria.

“For some following years I travelled through the countries that surround the Mediterranean Sea,—in Spain, Italy, and Greece,—in Egypt and Asia Minor, and Africa. By slow degrees I learnt to take a transitory interest in the scenes and actors that surrounded me; but I soon grew weary of each object in suc-

cession for which I had seemed to care. I engaged in the wildest adventures almost with indifference, and they brought me nothing but danger and weariness. I have seen many of the most glittering and imposing aspects of the world, and said that all are vanity. I have gazed on a mighty and splendid army, camped around the pyramids, and thought how petty is all the glory of the present, when placed beside the silent wonders of the earliest past. I explored the pyramids themselves, and reflected how trivial are those monstrous heaps which enshrine only the legend of priests and the bones of animals. I have watched a countless fleet, sailing at evening over a smooth sea, beneath the arches of a double rainbow, and seeming, while it sought the west, as if it too would

disperse at nightfall into air among the other momentary glories of sunset. Those war-clouds of man's contrivance were dissipated in storm and battle; and I saw a fisherman strip the idle pendant of the admiral from the stranded topmast. There are mountains which I have climbed where never wild goat trod, and beheld the moon blazing in a sky black as a vault of jet; while Jupiter, radiant like the morning sun, rose above the eastern crags: they shone on a desolate and lifeless region, not more dreary than my breast. And while I have contemplated vast rivers, with waves that murmured to my ear a tale of all the empires they had traversed,—while I have seen them battling for many a mile with the ocean that was inevitably absorbing them,—so I thought man

struggles, incessantly and in vain, with that unfathomable sea of fate, which devours while it seems to repel him.

“ Employed, but scarcely occupied, in such wanderings, and such meditations, I looked back with regret to the excitements I had before felt. Other loves, and more disheartening vices than those that had so rent my mind, sometimes engaged, but never contented me. And all I knew of in the present and the past, disgusted me with myself, and taught me to despise the condition of man.

“ These feelings, however, did not so completely master me, as to make me forget Isabel, my early and gentle friend. I delighted to remember her, as a contrast to the beings I had associated with for so many years. Even Victoria, immeasurably the loveliest and noblest of

them all, was of a character in which were mingled many of the fiery agents of moral revolutions ; and the nature of her anxieties and wishes, and her acquaintance with many of the most active and devious spirits of our time, had produced in her a tendency to the diseased and sleepless self-consciousness which I have found so constant a source of misery. I recollected Isabel as eminently delicate and feminine, full of reliance and unsuspecting faith, and bold only when secure that she was walking within the shaded and retired precincts of her duties. In her seemed to be concentrated all that I could value in the name of country ; and the chance of still holding a place in her affections, was the only one, among the million possibilities of human existence, which was worth taking into calculation.

“ Such were the thoughts that occupied me during a long illness which I suffered in Egypt. I had fought in the gorgeous throng of Mamelukes which burst and was broken against the French battalions, under the walls of Cairo ; and, being severely wounded, it was by mere accident that I escaped from the field, and, after a confinement of many months, was received on board an English vessel, which landed me at Plymouth.

“ I own that in re-visiting England I had formed no plan on which to act, and was not certain what were my own wishes. I thought of Isabel far more than of any living being, and had no power to resist the current of remembrances and affections which drew me towards her. When I had reached the place of her abode, I found myself

exposed to increasing fluctuations in my desires and fancies. But I was determined at least to see her, although I had an inexplicable dread of an interview—an apprehension which the event but too well justified. I spent many hours of the night in the covert of a wood, with my eyes fixed on the windows which I supposed to be those of her apartment; and from the same dark retreat I saw her, in the early morning, walking in her garden, as I had seen her many years before, in the grounds of Deer Hill. I do not know what guess I had previously formed as to her appearance. But I was startled at finding in her one, not indeed broken or melancholy, but serious and serene, as if every day since we last met had added its contribution of thoughtfulness. She was still lovely, youthful still.

But, in spite of a few lines of care, and a glance, in which I fancied there was something caught, perhaps of old, from mine, the meditative composure of her look removed her far from the region of my habits, associations, and remembrances. Such must souls appear, when, having borne with meekness their earthly burthens, they arrive, untouched by a breath of purgatory, at the gates of Paradise.

“ I did not dare to show myself to her ; yet after she had disappeared, it was with extreme reluctance that I left the spot from which I had beheld her. As soon as I could sufficiently command myself, I wrote, and sent to her, a sincere account of my history since we parted, and expressed in it the profound tenderness and devotion with which I regarded

her. I added, that I asked only to be received by her as a friend, and scarcely hoped for more than to find, that she still thought of me with kindness and interest.

“ I have more pain in telling you how she answered me, than in all the rest of this communication. Her letter was, indeed, gentle and friendly ; but tranquil, decided, far aloof from any participation in the ardent and anxious feelings which I had professed towards her, and void of all sympathy with the tempestuous succession of impulses and views which I had described. Yet her words in sound were simple—I had almost said girlish. She called me her dear Arthur, her cousin, the playmate of her childhood ; and said she had felt a throb of delight on finding, from my letter, that I was

still living. She avowed that she had formerly loved me, had constantly prayed for my welfare, and still treasured the image of what I was. She added, that, in spite of the indistinctness with which my wishes for the future were expressed, she would write as to one to whom she had been more fondly attached than she probably would be again to any one; that in the statement I had addressed to her, with many remains of fine natural qualities, and many records of feeling which had drawn from her abundant tears, she found what seemed to her so much selfishness with regard to others, such hopeless abandonment to every impulse, and such indifference to what I might have known as the truth, that she was convinced, whatever influence I might acquire over her in any future

intercourse, would be a source of nothing but anxiety and remorse. She closed her letter by saying, she had never seen any one but me whom she could love; and that I might judge of the nature of her feelings, and of the strength of her conviction in thus bidding me farewell, 'not,' she continued, 'without a humble prayer, often to be repeated, that your self-delusions may in time be dispelled, and your terrific pride subdued, by Christian faith.'

"This tyrannous fanaticism divides her from me for ever. She has finally trampled on a heart already severely tried; and I can only trust that the blow which reduces me to apathy and recklessness, may not be injurious to her own comfort.

"In gravity and sadness, which are



likely to be my portion through the remainder of my life, I now proceed to describe to you my views for the future. It is true, Henry, that I am not destitute of the world's goods; neither do I feel myself to want the seeds of fame, nor the elements of virtue. My position, if not splendid, is sufficiently elevated to give me a large prospect of society, and to be an important vantage ground for rising to far more conspicuous eminence. These things, however, are all merely relative to the individuals whom they concern. I am not a very wealthy man, but my income is more than I feel occasion to spend. I have often fancied that I had a tongue and hand which might suffice to win a moderate share of renown; but I would not utter a syllable or stir a finger to become as

celebrated as Sesostris or Mahomet. The great only in action I have intellect enough to consider as my inferiors. The great in thought have built their superiority upon a moral foundation, to which I find no counterpart in myself. That sympathy with mankind, by which they have become its leaders, champions, and teachers, has been rooted up in me, like a dead stump, by the pickaxe of worldly experience ; and I could almost as readily attempt to emulate such worthless tools as Marlborough or Frederic, as try to appropriate the meaning and the purposes of Plato or Shakspeare.

“A man can propose to himself but one of two objects,—the world without and the world within. I have almost equal contempt for both. I will take what most people would call a tolerably

sober and rational view of my situation. I am an English gentleman, with all the education and a fair share of the ability necessary for adorning the character I fill. I belong thus to a country certainly one of the two or three best that ever have existed. Yet, what is there in this nation on which to look with any satisfaction? Take the aristocracy as a body, and those in whom the coarse clay of the present generation is leavened with the fine admixture of ancient honour, and what does the whole amount to? A miserable mass of self-conceited ignorance and vulgar profligacy, in which the affectation of refinement is as disgusting as rouge on the cheeks of a corpse. The classes immediately below this, the clergy, the lawyers, the merchants, are not much better, and are far more

disagreeable; every man but an expression and representative of the sordid interests of his order—a tradesman in the disguise of a sage. Is it here that I can find those on whom I am to act, and whose applause I must aspire to win? And for the mob—Oh! wise philosophy of Girondists and democrats, which makes of those meagre and squalid materials an idol for great intellects to worship!

“Henry, I do not blame you for seeing something in England to be cultivated and cared for; but to me there appears nothing in my country, save these two elements:—on the one hand, the physical multitude of men, the gathered ignorance and barbarism of a score millions of human beings, individually contemptible and collectively odious; and on the other, the great

ideas of Law, Knowledge, Religion, attempted to be embodied and realised in institutions which utterly fail of their purpose, and are no more connected with the crowd that gives them so much hypocritical reverence, than with the herds of animals, almost as intelligent, which throng our soil and minister to our necessities. And this is my country! Alas, for the poor fools who nourish their vanity, under the pretence of serving it! The nation is not, perhaps, less enviable than the Romans or the Egyptians of old, who, like us, talked pompously, lived wretchedly, rose to renown, and perished, by no volition of their own. So will it be with England. She is as prosperous and happy as have been other communities; they are knaves who would make her less so, fools who would make

her more. Why, if a man had the resolution to do good, where are the tools with which to work? Is it with a church indifferent to all but its own monopoly; or with lawyers, the most despicable, but the most devoted of the devil's instruments; or with that gay retinue of silken minions, nobles, and warriors, and damsels, whose heads are not less dull than their garb is brilliant?

“No; mean and barren as the mind may be, I had rather apply myself to it, deck out its follies, and deify its conceits, than be busied about things around me. But of religion, poetry, and philosophy, formerly in my eyes the three great subjects of human study and elements of human power, I think but as of fine dreams, from which I have wakened and found myself in darkness.

“ Of religion, indeed, I still hold that it is the most splendid pageant conceivable by the human fancy. No hand but that of Him who divided light from darkness could have spread upon the dim clouds of human history such an array of beaming and significant images as that tree, which, in the very bosom of the garden of life, was teeming with the seeds of death ; those tablets, thunder-scarred with the characters of heaven ; and that cross, in which were stored the most dreadful load of agony, and the richest treasure of hope and life.

“ Eight years ago, I often seemed to myself, though standing on the lowly sod of our planet, to lift among the stars a forehead encircled with the choicest blossoms that can spring from the clay of mortality. I moved, a dedicated

and exalted being. I now feel levelled to the creeping things, and incapable of raising my eyes from off the dust. To my understanding religion is still the same wondrous theory, embodied in the same splendid symbols. But it is nothing more. I do not feel its influence within me. I see the beauty of the harvest, but I do not eat the bread.

“Neither can poetry any longer supply me as once with food and raiment. The faculty, the creation, the life is gone. With dazzled eyes I see the triumphs of the lightning; with earnest ears I listen to the shoutings of the thunder; but I no longer wield the bolts, or pour around my path the flashing radiance. Beauty is the mistress of my senses, not the daughter of my meditations; and instead

of the activity of the poet, I experience only the passiveness of the dreamer.

“ Of philosophy I am alike weary. In my boyhood, ten years ago, and somewhat previously, I flung myself headlong into its domain, to find a meaning for the millions of inexplicable emblems presented to me by the universe, and an answer to the doubts which thronged and tortured my intellect. I soon found that the most degrading moral theory, that the vilest form of Epicureanism, which has prevailed in our day, is no more a master-key than doctrines which allow for and sanction the nobler sympathies and convictions of mankind. But I now acquiesce in the difficulties, and am weary of the idle attempt at their solution.

“ What, then, shall I do? Whither

shall I betake myself? This was the question which I asked some months ago, when I first came to this retreat. It stands but a few yards from the sea, which I have always so much loved. I was born upon the shore, and an Englishman has almost an innate propensity to delight and exult in the presence of his national element. In childhood I thought of it as a watery garden of God. Its birds, its winds, its never-ceasing melody, the innumerable colours born of its depths or reflected on its surface, all seemed to me divine. I have lived for days and nights alone in my own small skiff on the waste of waves, and been elevated by the conception of that unbounded elemental power, on whose breast I felt myself no more than a bubble of its spray. I have seen, on a sudden, through the enormous

portals of a range of mountains, the ocean barrier rising solid and black, as if from earth's foundations to the stars. And, when on summer seas, I have watched the foam that streamed beside and behind the ship I commanded, and have marked the flood of molten pearl for ever breaking into phosphoric flashes of diamond and topaz, I have heard the sad sweet voice of a Nereid, instilling music into my heart. I have loved, in noontide caverns, to note the withered leaf and empty shell, which seemed to repeat to each other a tale of the perishing of all things earthly, while the waves around made answer, that they knew not decay. But, above all, in hours of vacuity and dejection, I have seen in the ocean a symbol of a blind, impersonal, eternal, self-existent, godless

nature, in whose abysses man might lose his perplexed individual being, and find a fitting and final consummation to his despair.

“ But no notion of this sort, and not much, I believe, even of the universal sensation of awe and pleasure in the aspect of this vast and mysterious girdle of the globe, occurred to my mind at the moment when, after my visit to the abode of Isabel, I caught the first glimpse of its grey expanse. I was completely occupied by the consciousness of the revolution, which had so altered all my character since I first walked on the sea-shore after leaving Oxford. I was then overflowing with hopes now turned to bitterness, and not thought of without pain. Life, then gladness and expectation, is now disgust and terror. I am

another being, while every thing beyond myself remains as fixed as the eternal sameness of its Creator. Why, then, does all around me gaze at me with so changed an air? I was then greedy for my own sensations. My musings turned the waves into congratulating friends. I embraced them with my heart, and exulted in compelling them to sympathy with my own aspirations. They are now no more than so much brine,—a mighty piece of hydrostatic mechanism, splendid to the eye, astonishing to the intellect. Yet I have a certain dim and mournful pleasure, arising probably from the remembrance of former feelings, in walking along the sands on which the billows break, and catching the murmurs which are borne on the night-breeze through my chamber windows; or when

morning opens on the waters, I still love to watch the spreading foam which brightens the sands into a mirror of the various heaven, and, fast disappearing, leaves them again a momentary blank.

“The house in which I am now living is far more than half of it a ruin. There are still considerable remains of four tall and large towers of red stone, with parts of the walls which connected them into a quadrangle. One of the two which front the sea is in pretty good repair, and it forms my present abode. Along the whole of this side of the old castle runs a broad terrace, which crowns a sloping, irregular, and thickly-wooded bank, rising from the sandy shore. A peasant of rather better station than the multitude lives in the rear of the ruins, and superintends a small farm, scooped

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from these crags and forests, and cultivated by two or three labourers, whose cottages are the only abodes within several miles.

“I have paced these sands, or sat upon this terrace, or, in less favourable weather, listened in my apartment to the roar of the waters, during most of the time since I have been in England. I have reviewed my own history and position, and have just explained to you some of the results. I have thought over the story of my travels,—Sweden, with its crags, and lakes, and forests; Germany, and those antique towns, and that all-pervading intellect; Spain, the emblazoned tomb of courage and renown; France, with its systematic poverty of mind; and Italy, so passive and yet so lovely in her moral degradation. I

meditated on all these, and on the defaced remains of Grecian and Asiatic empire which border the Mediterranean; on what I had done and undergone among them, and what I could still expect to feel or to perform. But all seemed flat and barren; nor is there a spot of those wide regions to which I can look with hope or rejoicing. All these nations are but millions of repetitions of myself, thinking thoughts which are my thoughts, speaking languages which I have spoken, surrounded by an eternal mesh of those same unprofitable and monotonous associations wherein I am entangled, struggling with the same difficulties, baffled by the same disappointments, and wearied with the very disgust which oppresses me.

“Of France, the early Eden of my yet untempted faith and unfallen hopes, I

can scarcely think without loathing; or if that be ever exchanged for any other emotion, it is for exultation at the doom which awaits a despicable people. O nation, in whose virtue I once so fondly confided; to whom I thought that I could safely devote what I felt as the sacred treasure of my youthful enthusiasm; ye who have been guilty of so many crimes, so many terrific mockeries against the reliance of those who loved you! to me, meditating in anguish on the story of my life, it seems that you have been the final betrayers of the cause of all mankind. From you we have learned to be assured that no people have the self-command to accomplish, that therefore none are entitled to attempt, their own regeneration. The visionary, the hopeful, the patriotic, the

self-devoted—all by you are disabused of the chimera, that man is sufficient to his own happiness. On you, to my eyes, weighs a more shameful load; for ye were my accomplices in destroying a woman worthier by far than all your millions. Be it my rueful comfort that ye have also wrought your own perdition; that in the unconscious frenzy of licence ye have fitted yourselves for subjugation. The slaves who dreamed of freedom will wake, and find that, in their sleep, they have been laden with heavier shackles than before. Even now I imagine that I see your aimless agitations stilled, your selfish factions crushed beneath the pavement of a vast sepulchral vault, which hereafter will echo, in ceaseless reverberations, only the name and dismal honours of one tyrant.

“ But what, indeed, can I hope for in all Europe, when there is scarcely one of its provinces in which I have not heard the very same dull desperation which I feel, expressed alike by its starving peasants and its surfeited nobles? Our formal creeds, and conventional systems, and worn-out modes of existence, contain no seed of strength or happiness. I remember to have heard, while standing in the shadow of the Colosseum, a squalid beggar rate his wife, for asking of me an alms to save her infants from perishing. ‘ Silence,’ said the shaggy and wasted outcast, ‘ silence, fool! Why should you plunder that idler, to prolong the lives of three beings, who will be as miserable and stupid as yourself? They groaned when they were born; they will be idiots enough to sigh on their death-beds; and

all between is a senseless jumble of eating, to preserve a life they detest; sleeping, to be haunted by terrific dreams; waking to toil; wedding for weariness; praying to a God for whom they care not; and begging from men who care not for them.' The lesson was worth remembering. He expressed but what he felt; and what he felt is the feeling of almost every man in Europe.

"When I have seen a youthful mother bending in delight over the bed of her sleeping child, whom she had shaded with garlands of flowers, 'Change those wreaths,' I would have exclaimed, 'for cypress and ominous nightshade. Even your twenty summers might have taught you, that a coffin would be the only appropriate cradle in which our kind could lull its offspring. Can you frame

for your infant, or yourself, a wish nearly so beneficent, as that those fond looks might convert the smiling sleeper into marble or ivory, and perpetuate that aspect of repose, secure from the conflict in which life for ever wars against happiness ?’

“ There is another continent, Henry, than ours, in which, for a time at least, I may perhaps find peace. I came hither after a life of artificial society in fields and cities, and found myself amid a lonely wilderness of ruin, in which there is scarcely a breath of actual life, or a shadow of present meaning. I sat one evening upon the mouldering wall of the terrace. The hum of insects, the occasional chirp of birds, the wide, continuous whisper of the forests, and the faint, regular murmur of the dreaming ocean,

were the only sounds that reached me. The black woods sank on either hand to the waters, and the sky before me was steeped in splendour. The glow in the centre, at the point where the sun had just disappeared, was softened and dispersed among the carnation clouds around and above it, and a wavering path of peculiar glory traversed the colours reflected from them in the sea. The west, in which glades of delicate primrose were mingled with wide fields of the richest crimson, seemed an island of the immortals, and broad garlands and scattered flowers, of the same effulgent hues, encircled it, and were relieved upon the blue and quiet sky. One faint star, the star of the west, rose trembling into view ; and I thought, in the extravagance of lawless fancy, Is not that the genius,

and are not those the meadows, of a happier region than any I have wandered in? Why cannot I pursue that radiance to its fountain, and win for myself a heritage in that occidental paradise?

“This was idle dreaming. But in that instant there dawned upon my mind, and piled itself against the heavens, a vision of the American wilderness. I saw no longer that immediate splendour on which I had been gazing, but it gleamed in faint and broken rays through the ancient, interminable forests, which resound to the song of the mocking-bird, and are traversed only by the red-skinned hunter. There were broad and green Savannahs, with grey crags, and glittering waters, and the stately antlers of the elk, and the rushing herd of bisons. The long lakes, the awful cataracts, the village of

wigwams, the assembly at the council-fire, the scenery of that stage on which man walks in individual freedom, were all before me ; and I seemed only to live for the undivided expanse of the desert, and to know not any brother but the Indian, its primeval inhabitant.

“ That picture, indeed, faded from before me ; and when the continent of forest, and all its array of visions, had disappeared, the spot of the sunset had become a blank, the stars were assembling in the sky, and the thin mist of evening was around me. But though I turned and left the presence of the ocean, and the bare, remote magnificence of the heavens, and entered my apartment, the images I had beheld were with me even in its narrow confines ; they had become my most precious possession, and were a

part of my very being. I cherished what I had seen, or what I had thought more vividly than we see with our fleshly eyes; I brooded over it, and nourished it. It was nearly dawn before I sought to sleep; but during that night I had fixed my plan, and resolved to execute it; and the days that have since elapsed have deepened my determination.

“ I have exhausted Europe of what it can yield me; I am tired of the noise and jar applied among us to produce so few and simple results. Your civilization seems to me a long, busy play, without plot or end, and in which none of the characters perform their parts even tolerably, except the confidants and lacqueys. I will go and gaze upon another mode of humanity, if not belong to it. And whether or no I am to be happy or

virtuous, I shall at least escape from seeing that which has wearied me, and be unrestricted by customary bonds. Henry, farewell! I shall carry the remembrance of you into a form of society, whither, I presume, you have but little thought that your image would ever reach. We shall probably never meet again. I have no design of returning to Europe; for I regard it as a plot of ground, trodden and hardened by the pressure of millions of footsteps, so that no ploughshare, likely to be applied to it, will be able to penetrate the surface, and permit the growth of the seeds which may be buried beneath. Consider me henceforth a sachem, a hermit, an exile, a madman, what you will; as lost, dead, gone for ever, but not as forgetful of your long and undeserved kindness.

Some future wanderer in the western forests will perhaps stumble or pause at a low mound in some dark thicket, but there will be neither inscription nor emblem to inform him, that the bones of an English outcast were there laid in earth by the hands of the red warriors."

ἀεὶ δὲ τοῦ παρόντος ἀχθῆδὼν κακοῦ
τρύσει σ' ὁ λωφῆσων γὰρ οὐ πέφυκέ πω.

"And evermore shall the burthen of the agony of thy present evil wear thee down; for he that shall deliver thee exists not in nature."

Oxford Translation of Æschylus.

THE END.

